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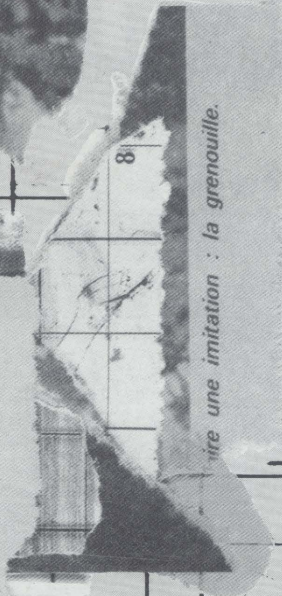
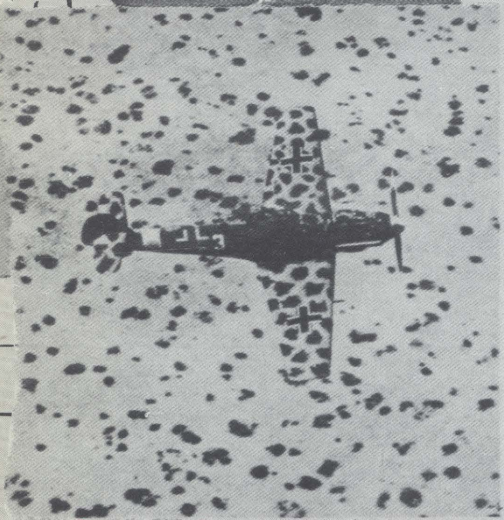
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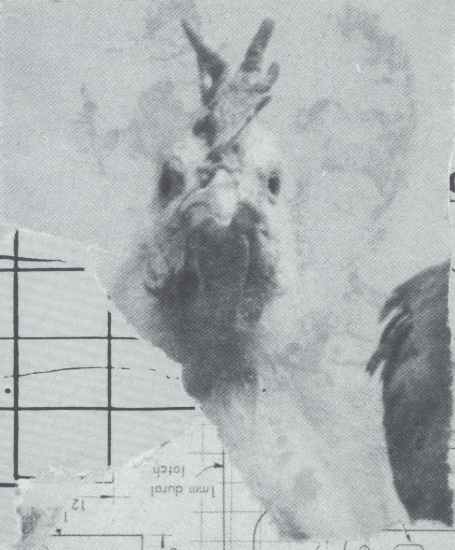
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Editor
Penelope Houston
Associate Editor
John Pym
Designer
Gillian Crampton Smith
Publications Manager
John Smoker

On the cover:
Peter Greenaway's
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film 'The Falls'

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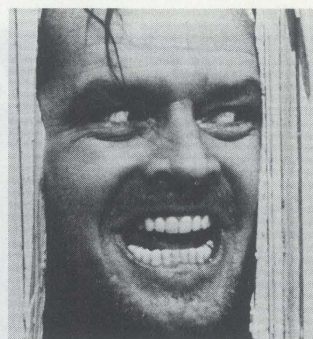


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ON NOW

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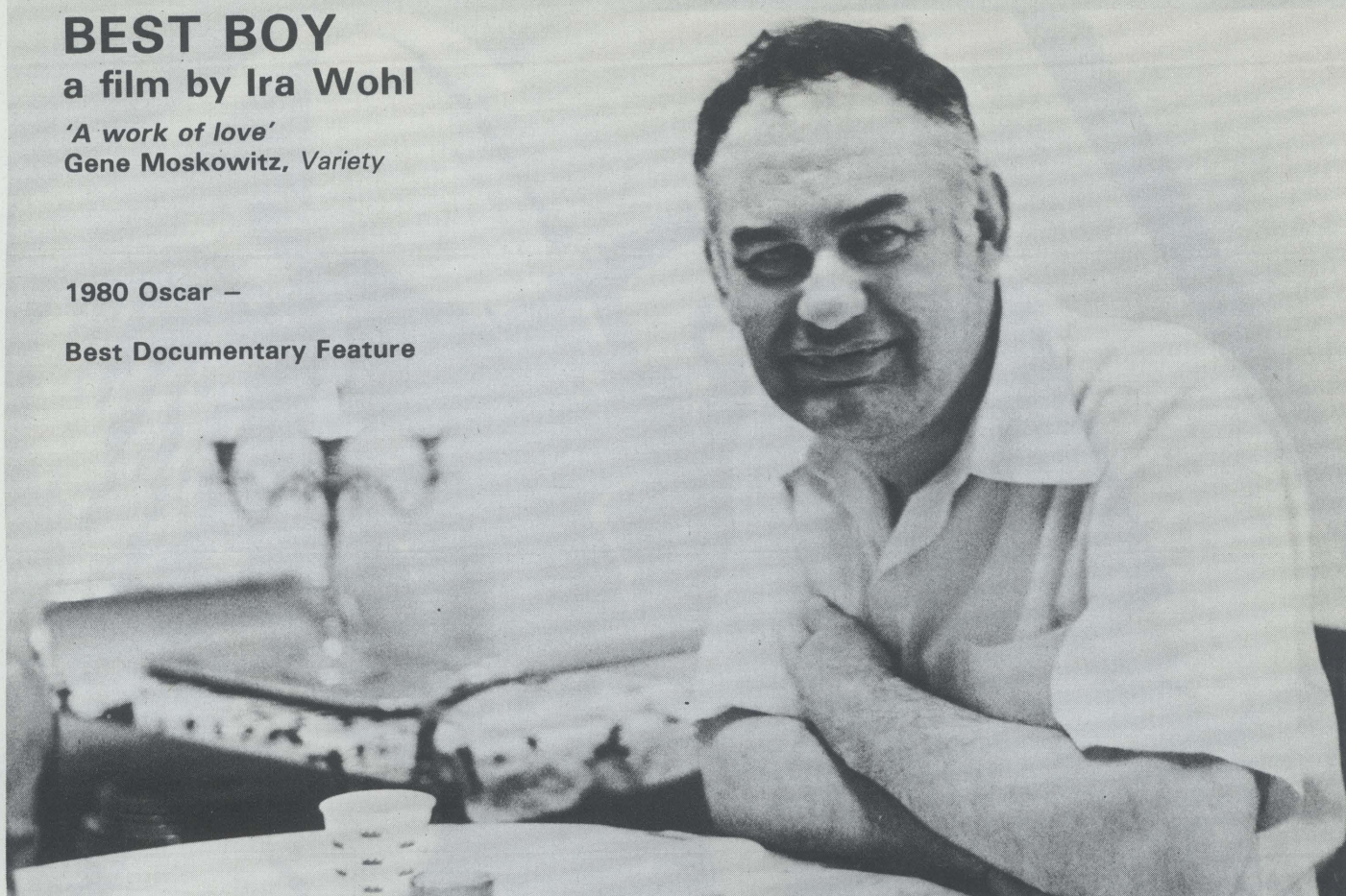
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news

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ALEXANDER WALKER, *Evening Standard*

Front-line camera team after a day's shooting in the trenches

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**KEVIN
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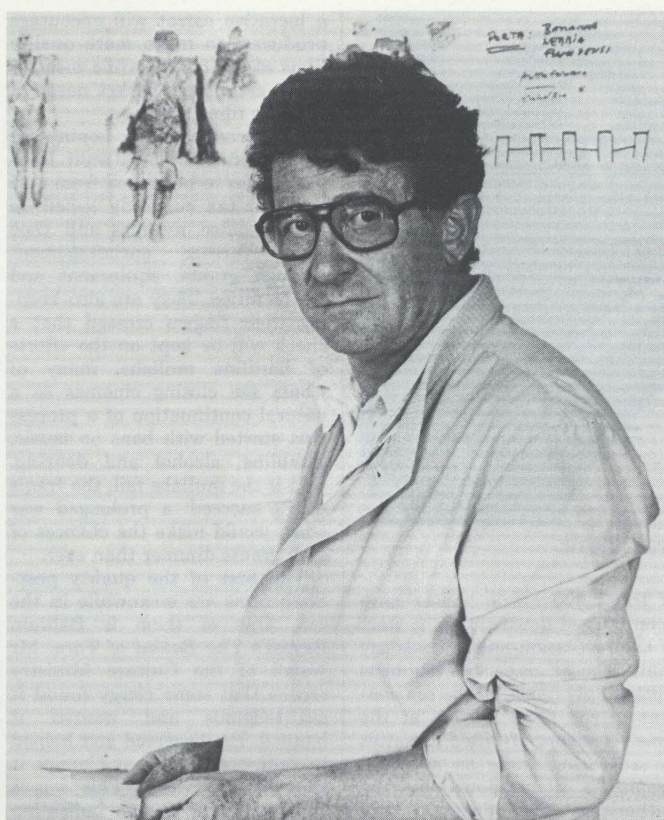
Olmi in Volterra

Ermanno Olmi is interviewed in Tuscany during shooting of his new film, 'a journey in search of a Utopia'

Volterra is one of the most ancient and sombre cities of Tuscany. D. H. Lawrence found some of his Etruscan ghosts there and Visconti made it the setting for his reworking of Greek tragic themes in *Vaghe stelle dell'orsa*. The city sits on a hilltop crowned by a fortress which is today a bleak prison where even recently there has been a violent revolt. Volterra itself was always fighting, without much success, to defend itself from Pisa or from Florence, and today you can see in its inhabitants the mark left by these battles. They are stubborn, reserved, suspicious. On top of which they have a mental hospital whose patients on their morning walks are liable to be easily confused with the 'normal' local people. Ermanno Olmi, who is at Volterra making his first film since *The Tree of Wooden Clogs*, has set up his production quarters in a villa which was previously the residence of the hospital director. The first day we met him there, he warned us that it would be difficult to distinguish the locals from the inmates.

The film is called *Cammina Cammina* (Walking, Walking). Like *The Tree of Wooden Clogs*, it will be three hours long and will be shown first in the cinemas and then on TV, and Olmi is again working without a real shooting script. He didn't want to say much about it. When the producers, RAI, announced that it was about the birth of a new Christ, Olmi promptly closed the set to everyone. We had been lucky enough to do our interview for LWT before he started shooting.

We filmed him on a mountain top beside some Etruscan ruins that he and his craftsmen were adapting into what looked like a shrine. The Olmi people had cut their way through the undergrowth to make a path up the mountain, and on that hot afternoon of the interview we followed behind with our crew, puffing and sweating. Olmi had got to the top briskly. He had just celebrated his 49th birthday the week before, and looked vigorously energetic. He is more than ever the 'do it yourself director'. As on all his films since *The Scavengers* (1969), he is totally in charge of the cinematography and does everything else too. On the new film, he seems particularly involved in the sets and costumes, whose rôle must be significant in a film which he says is set outside any definable period or place. He is expecting the 'actors', who are all local people, to help design



Ermanno Olmi at production headquarters in Volterra.

their own costumes. The 'period', if so it can be called, will be allowed to emerge from the way they feel.

Olmi admits that the film is an allegory. This is quite an innovation for a director who has always faithfully reconstructed reality when he couldn't reproduce it as he found it. For example: the farmhouse of *Wooden Clogs* in the Bergamo countryside, which we found almost as Olmi had left it. The owner, a rather well-off peasant now owning much of the surrounding land, let us film there and came to visit us not because he wanted to be paid—as Olmi had told us he might—but because he was proud that his abandoned farmhouse had become an object for a foreign TV crew to film. In the area, the farmhouse is treated as an archaeological curiosity; something of their grandparents' past which TV has made famous.

With the new film, however, Olmi has to invent. We asked whether there was a risk in resorting to allegory. 'Certainly there is,' he said. 'I'm working in a key that I'm not used to. But there are moments when direct speech becomes difficult, indeed at times even prevents you from being able to communicate clearly. There is a confusion in words, in concepts. We know we are living through a very traumatic moment in history. As often happened in the past at moments like this, one tried to reach a synthesis through parable. Metaphorical stories became models. So I want to make a film which is metaphorical not only in its physical and historical period but also in its essence.

I'm withdrawing from any recognisable reality in the hope that I can communicate this essence.'

Might this be taken as escapism, especially by those critics of the Italian left who objected to the 'Christian resignation' of the peasants in *The Tree of Wooden Clogs*? 'It's not an escape. In *Wooden Clogs* I was trying to connect with a reality that is disappearing. Here I am making use of a reality which is improvised, as part of a performance. But these constructions, this make-believe, come out of the reality itself, as in people's theatre. Every now and then people in these parts dress up as a prince or a king, while others dress as beggars. Then they perform their parables. That's the meaning of this film. The actors will leave behind their everyday clothes but will bring with them their spiritual, cultural and psychological make-up. They will dress up in costume for a film that will be like a "popular" theatrical performance.'

An idea of what this means in practice was to be seen in the rooms and garden of the villa, where Olmi flitted about measuring costumes, helping actors and technicians (it was never easy to identify which was which) as they painted or sewed or carpentered. The great Tuscan craftsmanship was everywhere evident, but nobody would choose the colour of a dye or the shape of a dagger without Olmi's approval. 'Nothing must be recognisable,' was his continual plea.

It was clear that two worlds were being created before our eyes. One was theatrical, operatic,

the materials for a real theatre. The other was something as old or as new as the land of Volterra, something the Etruscans could have used but which the patients in the local hospital or the convicts in the fortress would also take to naturally. The film is about a journey in search of a Utopia and the return to the starting point. That much was clear. Like all Olmi's films, it reflects a particular moment in his life: the doubts that come after an undreamed of but gratifying success. One suspects it will be to *The Tree of Wooden Clogs* what 8½ was to *La Dolce Vita* for Fellini.

JOHN FRANCIS LANE

Extracts reproduced from the transcript of an interview conducted by John Francis Lane for *The South Bank Show* study of Olmi's work by Geoff Dunlop, scheduled to be transmitted by ITV on 8 March 1981. Printed by permission of London Weekend Television.

Iranian Revival

The Iranian cinema, after some years of turmoil, has found an unlikely supporter in the Ayatollah Khomeini

Iran's isolation on the world scene and the continuing influence of hardline Moslem fundamentalists threaten to torpedo prospects of a major revival in the country's beleaguered film industry. The Shah, predictably, is blamed for the crisis which faced the industry during the final years of his reign, when production slumped from the mid-1960s annual average of 100 features to 1977's all-time low of four. The new regime says that some of the best film-makers were driven from the country by a combination of ruthless censorship, a flood of foreign movies, favouritism in allocation of government grants and a subsequent loss of confidence among investors.

Suddenly, early in 1980, the business started picking up at speed. Many top directors returned to the studios, assured that Shah-style censorship was scrapped, that everyone in power knew the cinema had a 'prophetic mission' in a country still largely illiterate, and that the home industry could do nothing but improve once foreign films deemed non-Islamic and non-revolutionary had been rooted out. By summer film-makers were predicting a boom year of up to 80 features. Culture Ministry officials were speaking of a 'renaissance' and many in the film industry concurred. 'It's unbelievable, how fast we've recovered,' said a Teheran studio lab boss. 'We could soon be back to 100 films a year. Maybe not all of them will be good, but we must

IN THE PICTURE



'The Ballad of Tara', directed by Bahram Beyzai.

have films in quantity for a real revival—the more we produce, the more quality films and new talent will emerge.

Big obstacles still stand in the way of that goal. Not the least of film-makers' worries in 1980 was that economic sanctions against Iran in protest at the hostage-taking could stem the tide of their new wave. Officials scoffed at the idea, but no one in the industry doubted the crippling effects of an eventual dearth of film stock from Europe, the US and Japan. Another continuing complaint was censorship. Many say the rules are now more lax, more logical, but others (director Parviz Kimiavi among them) have claimed that things are as bad as ever and that the scissors simply snip in other directions. In the old regime a five-man board of censors included three members of the Shah's political police, Savak—and they were very, very sensitive. Nowadays two of the five are ministry men while the other three are from within the industry. The arrangement obviously works better. 'They have a more professional approach,' one film-maker said. 'We never knew what would upset the Shah's people, but we know more or less where we stand with these censors.'

The new set-up also pleases Mohammad Ali Najafi, an architect turned director who recently took charge of the Culture Ministry's film distribution department. He commented: 'The censors are dealing with people who know the limitations. Sex and gratuitous violence are obviously out, but nothing else is likely to be censored unless it commercialises or misuses revolutionary ideals. And in that case the film will not be cut—it simply won't be shown.'

Distributors have another reason to beware of offensive material: in the last few years outraged Moslems have shown themselves more inclined to destroy the offending cinema than the offending film. Several dozen

of Iran's 400 movie houses have been burned down since the start of the revolution and officials say that, in most cases, the arsonists were simply upset by the sex content of the films playing at the time. Hawkers of video cassettes do a roaring trade as a result, despite a clamp-down by the authorities. One dealer's 1980 catalogue offered hundreds of non-Islamic movies ranging from *Bambi* (80 dollars) to *Deep Throat* (300 dollars).

Official bans on so-called 'west-toxicated' films have obviously helped the home industry, and a further filip came last spring in the form of a pat on the back from Ayatollah Khomeini. An unlikely movie fan, the religious leader said Iranian films were some of the best in the world, and he confessed himself particularly taken with *The Cow*, Darius Mehrjui's compelling study of loneliness and madness which won special mentions at the 1971 Chicago and Venice festivals. 'Very instructive,' Khomeini remarked after a TV screening. Surprised officials promptly ordered prints to be run off for nationwide distribution.

Ideology apart, two major moves have been taken specifically to encourage the home industry. Under one measure, announced in March 1980, movies from India, Turkey, Pakistan and Iraq were banned unless those countries bought Iranian films. The second measure, urged by film-makers for ten years but only now being introduced, involves a points system aimed at preventing Iranian producer-distributors from harming the industry by cashing in on the comparative cheapness of foreign-made films—an average 50,000 dollars against 150,000 dollars for a made-in-Iran production. Now a panel will award between one and four points for each new Iranian film. A producer who earns four points will be allowed to import four films. A two-star rating will give him the right to import two, and so on. The hope is that such

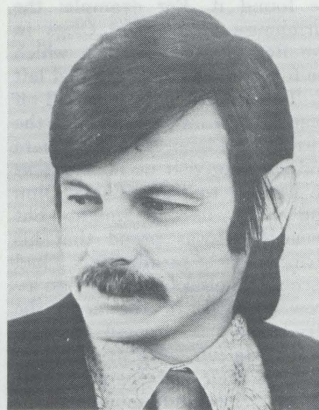
a lucrative carrot will encourage producers to make more quality films of their own, while meeting Iran's estimated market needs of 300 new films a year.

The producers are hoping for more than this. They want Iranian movies to be spared from a 25 per cent tax currently levied on all box-office receipts and they want further encouragement through grants, equipment and lab facilities. They are also keeping their fingers crossed that a check will be kept on the efforts of hardline mullahs, many of whom see closing cinemas as a natural continuation of a process that started with bans on music, gambling, alcohol and dancing. And if the mullahs fail, the Iraqis might succeed: a prolonged war effort would make the chances of cash grants dimmer than ever.

The first of the quality post-Shah films are meanwhile in the can. One of them is Bahram Beyzai's *The Ballad of Tara*. Mr Najafi of the Culture Ministry recalls that some clergy found it anti-religious and wanted it banned. He disagreed and helped to promote it, and at Cannes it won warm reviews. This was a small triumph but an indication that, as luck would have it, some of those with the most muscle in Iran have the industry's best interests at heart.

STEPHEN MCDONNELL

Tarkovsky's Apocalypse



Andrei Tarkovsky.

An expatriate Russian commentator points up the Soviet dimensions of 'Stalker'.

Does the Soviet cultural leadership want Andrei Tarkovsky? Self-evidently, they have not, are not, and will not be able to welcome—or even contemplate with equanimity—the 'phenomenon' of Tarkovsky, one of very few artists in the history of Soviet film whose creative world is in no way in conformity with the prevailing ideology. Indeed, this creative world openly challenges official, ideological myth. On the other hand, given the Soviet leader-

ship's thirst for recognition abroad—especially where 'the most important, the great mass art' is concerned—it is unthinkable that they should deprive themselves of their only major film artist.

Hence the contradictions. From time to time the Soviet authorities allow Tarkovsky to undertake projects at Mosfilm Studios (and costly projects too). They want international prestige, but they do everything possible to prevent his films being shown in competition at international festivals, as happened with *Andrei Rublev* and *Mirror*. The case of *Stalker* is slightly different, but still bears witness to the authorities' confusion and, to put it mildly, ambivalence towards Tarkovsky.

The film was first mentioned in January 1978 when Tarkovsky was in Paris for the opening of *Mirror*. He told a correspondent of the *International Herald Tribune*: 'My next film will be science-fiction [literally: science-fantastic]. It is called *Stalker*. Yes, an English word, signifying in this instance a man hunting for a secret. Shooting will begin in April in Estonia, and we intend to finish in September.'

At the 1979 Moscow Film Festival, there was a closed screening of *Stalker* strictly for foreign journalists. A few months later, the writer Alberto Moravia and the Venice Festival director Carlo Lizzani went to Moscow and were promised *Stalker* for the 1980 Venice Festival. However, to the Italians' consternation, the film appeared at Cannes—but only as a 'surprise'. The Soviet authorities did not want to risk Tarkovsky's film winning a prize, and the associated 'publicity', at either Cannes or Venice.

The reports of the Soviet correspondents at Cannes appeared after a month's delay: in *Izvestia* on 8 June, in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on 15 and 17 June, and in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on 18 June. Not one made even a passing reference to the screening of *Stalker*. Indeed, the *Izvestia* correspondent, A. Krivopalov, resorted to frank misinformation: 'Some journalists were anxious to know why no Soviet film was shown officially at Cannes.' Yet *Stalker* was officially in the festival programme. On 25 June, however, the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* did publish a general article, 'Inhabited Islands: Notes on Science-Fiction', in which Tarkovsky's films were listed among other old and new Soviet films. On 14 July, *Pravda* reported the success of a Soviet programme at the Pesaro Festival and mentioned, among other films, *Stalker*.

On 12 July, the newspaper *Sovietskaya Rossiya* carried an article which criticised Tarkovsky for distorting *Stalker's* literary source. It concluded: 'The effort by Tarkovsky to eliminate from what took place on the screen the

precise social context led to the Zone losing its original, clearly determined geographical and political location and to the film taking on a certain ambiguity.'

Stalker is nominally based on the novel *Picnic by the Roadside*, by the brothers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, which was published in 1973 in the Leningrad youth magazine *Aurora*. Unlike other science-fiction works by these authors, *Picnic by the Roadside* is politically 'safe'—leaving aside the Strugatskys' characteristic scepticism about scientific and technical progress, and their general pessimism. In this case, however, such attitudes did not attract the disapproval of the Soviet censors, since the story is set in America and the authors try—conscientiously but unsuccessfully—to create an unfamiliar 'reality' and 'Anglo-Saxon' characters. (In fact, they come up with every 'American' cliché generally held by the half-informed Soviet intelligentsia.)

In Tarkovsky's film almost nothing of the original survives. The Zone, a forbidden wasteland filled with incomprehensible phenomena, and the Stalker, the cynical smuggler who penetrates it, are retained, but have different, if not contrary, functions. This is no longer 'science-fiction'. Most significantly, the pseudo-American colouring has gone. The film gives no clear indication that the action now takes place in the Soviet Union. This, however, is unnecessary: apart from the battered Land Rover in which the hero bursts into the Zone, and the un-Soviet shape of the guards' white helmets, everything in the film is Soviet.

There are no names, simply Stalker, Scientist, Writer. But they are played by Alexander Kaidanovsky, Nikolai Grinko and Anatolii Solonitsin, actors whose appearance, manner and, above all, unusually 'natural' voices are wholly Soviet. The director's casting was clearly not fortuitous: he needed Grinko's soft Ukrainian accent and, in contrast, Kaidanovsky and Solonitsin's clear enunciation and Moscow speech. Alice Friedlich, Stalker's wife, is recognisably from Leningrad. The film's dialogue, in form and content, could only belong to the USSR, and to the Russian people.

Finally, Stalker himself, this half-saint, half-possessed, shaven-headed like a prisoner, this new, contemporary and future heir of Dostoevsky's Prince Mishkin, this spiritual brother of the present-day dissident martyrs—who could be more Russian?

Ten years ago, Andrei Tarkovsky wrote: 'Whether they are good or bad, in the final analysis my films are about one thing: the extreme manifestation of faith in a moral debt, the fight for it... I am interested in a hero, going on to the end, regardless of everything, for only such a man can triumph.' *Stalker* is the most

complete realisation of Tarkovsky's credo. And perhaps for this reason is, aesthetically, so simple and severe.

Interpretations abound. A correspondent of the Finnish newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet* has noted the pervasive Christian symbolism, the biblical motifs. Others may see in the film a powerful contribution to the ecological debate: Tarkovsky's anti-Utopia represents science and technology run amok, the destruction of Earth's natural resources. The world he has conjured is black and putrefying, with waterless reservoirs and neglected ruins.

In *Solaris*, as the cosmonaut bids farewell to Earth, the camera takes his point of view and gazes intently at the woodland stream, the reeds, the leaves carried on the current, the play of light on the clean, sandy bottom. This sense of wonder conveys the intransigent beauty of the world's architecture. In *Stalker*, we find an exact repetition: the camera gazes intently into mud brown liquid, in which are scraps of newspaper, shards of bottle glass, a broken syringe, iridescent bubbles of rot, every sort of detritus of the recent past, the doomed future.

One terrifying image stands out at the end of the film. Stalker, having returned home, walks with his wife and crippled daughter beside a river. On the other bank is a gigantic factory or power station. Its surroundings are poisoned, blackened; a dead river, dead vegetation. The sequence was filmed on location in Estonia. Not long ago Estonian dissidents published in the West documents testifying to the reality of this destruction. They stood witness to Tarkovsky's anti-Utopia.

VLADIMIR B. MATUSEVICH

Venice Preserved?

Invited film students consolidated the enthusiasm for Lizzani's second Festival

It is quite within the bounds of possibility, considering the uncertainties of Italian politics, that there will not be a Venice Film Festival this year. But the 1980 event, for which there was a reasonably propitious trial run in 1979, looked very much like the first of many more. If the films were, in a poor year, not much to write home about, the general enthusiasm and huge attendance took even an optimist like Carlo Lizzani, the Programme Director, by surprise.

Well over 1,200 journalists arrived on the Lido, to find that at the last moment the Festival's press hospitality budget had been cut in favour of inviting scores of film students instead, some of whom camped out on the beach. Every hotel and pensione was crammed, every café hopelessly overcrowded. As for the cinemas, even jury members had to fight for seats, and it was not long before the Italian critics slapped in an official complaint about the crush. What the public thought is anybody's guess, but it still attended in large numbers. Lizzani has promised copious reforms. He admits that there were probably too many films in 1980, and too few with either subtitles or earphone translations. 'We are learning all over again,' he comments, 'and will get it about right next time.'

The jury, equipped with three Golden Lions and special men-

tions galore, were generally held to have got it right this time. It was not at all a bad idea to give the Lion for the best orthodox film (the long explanation actually amounts to that) to two entrants—Louis Malle's *Atlantic City USA* and John Cassavetes' *Gloria*. Though it could have been thought ironic that Cassavetes, who has been subverting Hollywood orthodoxy all his directorial life, is now reckoned a member of this particular establishment.

Neither film looked anything like its director's best but, in moderate company, both shone out like beacons. *Atlantic City's* chief character is Burt Lancaster's elderly numbers runner, remembering the old gangster days with nostalgic fervour and persuaded to turn back the clock for real by a pretty divorcée (Susan Sarandon). But it is the city itself that achieves most resonance, with Malle skilfully observing its attempt to become a new Las Vegas under the shadow of its rumbustious but more gracious-looking past. Only the memory of Rafelson's *King of Marvin Gardens*, also made in Atlantic City, prevents one saying that it takes a European sensibility to handle the crumbling American Dream with the proper élan.

Cassavetes' *Gloria* is a comedy that looks a little deliberately designed to widen its director's appeal with the public while not entirely crushing his peculiar capacity for getting at the truth sideways. *Gloria* (Gena Rowlands) is a gangster's moll, persuaded by Buck Henry's shady accountant to save his little boy from a Mafia campaign to rub out the entire family for grassing. She almost does so by turning into a kind of contemporary Lauren Bacall as the pair race through the streets



Burt Lancaster in Louis Malle's 'Atlantic City USA'.

of Brooklyn, literally fighting off the Mob. The dream ending puzzles (is it the more pessimistic Cassavetes reasserting himself?); but much of the fun is admirably spiky, if intrinsically soft at its core.

Without much doubt, Thodoros Angelopoulos provided the meatiest fare with *O Megalexandros*, an epic of the by now familiar length of almost four hours. Alexander is a brigand who abducts a posse of English aristocrats from Athens at the turn of the century to a far-flung mountain village, where the inhabitants have chased out the landlords and set up a commune. They are joined not only by Alexander and his hostages but by a group of Italian anarchists. What Angelopoulos is attempting is not far short of a compressed history of socialism, with Alexander (Omero Antonutti) as the corrupting Stalin figure. Whether he succeeds or not is an open question, but the film, though stunning to look at and equipped with another superbly integrated musical soundtrack, does seem to turn in on itself. Nor, after a fine first hour, does it maintain the contact with its characters that made *The Travelling Players* so much more than a metaphor for Greek history. Nevertheless the Lion for the best 'experimental' film was in no way inappropriate.

There was, of course, much else. Antonioni's new version of *The Eagle Has Two Heads* suffered from a sense of *déjà vu*, particularly when we were as good as told that the director himself was not much interested in it save as an experiment. Monica Vitti looks as splendid as ever as the ill-fated Queen, but *The Mystery of Oberwald*, made in video and then electronically transferred to film, looked, at the festival screenings at any rate, like handwriting on blotting paper, its colour experiments merely striving after doubtful effect. One heard the word 'Sirkian' afterwards, but that seemed wishful thinking. Like most festival-goers, I did not see anything like all of Fassbinder's giant *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, but it looks as if Alfred Döblin's novel, about the making and breaking of a bourgeois gentleman, will make compulsive television, its main surprise being a fantastically ending that would not shame Syberberg himself. But what of John Huston's *Phobia*, made in Canada with Paul Michael Glaser, of Starsky fame, in the lead? It looked, alas, almost totally anonymous, a horror thriller that allows something as spitefully efficient as *Dressed to Kill* to look like a masterpiece.

And what, also, to make of the Glauber Rocha? *The Age of the World*, said to have been cut down from seven hours to its 158 minutes, was touted as 'an epic-didactic poem on the social and mystical contradictions of the contemporary world', and did

indeed eventually produce an interesting theory or two about the chance the Third World had of bringing socialism and capitalism together. But so undisciplined and self-indulgent a mess was surely asking for the panning it received. The director, however, gave as good as he got, calling the Italian press the running dogs of the Hollywood establishment, and the Hollywood establishment something even worse. Glauber Rocha made further announcements when the prizes were read out, mostly unprintable. But as Lizzani said, it woke things up.

For the rest, it was left to the excellent Mizoguchi retrospective to cause real enthusiasm. That and a special birthday tribute to Alessandro Blasetti in his eightieth year—a screening of *La Tavola dei Poveri*, made in 1932 but more than the equal of any of the new Italian films on display.

DEREK MALCOLM

Goran Paskaljević

The director of 'Special Treatment' talks about his work

Goran Paskaljević, who was in London last October for the opening of his *Special Treatment*, is one of the central figures in the incipient Second Coming of the New Yugoslav Cinema, along with Srđan Karanović, Vlatko Gilić, Mića Milošević, Lordan Zafranović, Goran Marcović—and whatever new young talents may have joined the debutants by the time this note appears.

Paskaljević is a slight, gentle man in his early thirties, who received his film education at the FAMU school in Prague. His first two years there were in the enchanted era when Forman, Passer, Nemeč, Menzel, Chytilová and the rest were in full activity, and his teachers included the late



'Special Treatment'.

Jan Kadar. His approach is grounded in a genuine passion for past film culture—the silents, *Sunrise* and (if only to judge from his own films) the same kind of Expressionist qualities in Fellini's work.

The Beach Guard in Winter turned up at the 1977 Berlin Festival and won a lot of applause for a first film. Its picture of an outsider was not altogether popular with official Yugoslavia; but Paskaljević went on to make another picture of outsiders in Serbian society in *The Dog Who Loved Trains*, written by Goran Mihić (another key figure in the new cinema) and a colourful, characterful and symbolic rail-'road' picture.

His next major film was *Special Treatment*, the Yugoslav entry in the 1980 Cannes Festival, which uses the setting of a clinic for alcoholics as a metaphor for a wider discussion of authority and its abuses, of benevolent, paternalist despotisms. At the same time that he was working on this, he made *The Earthly Days Keep Rolling*, which may owe its special attraction to its closeness to his real life experience. 'My parents were divorced when I was a child, and I was brought up by my grandparents. Now they are old and not strong; and a couple of years ago it seemed they would have to go to a home to be cared for. So I went to look at a lot of homes for them, and decided that they were not going to go to any of them. So now they live with me and my wife and my little boy. But out of this came the idea for *The Earthly Days Keep Rolling*, which is about an old man who comes to live in a home for old people, and through his own spirit is able to pull the others out of their lethargy. I like old age very well.'

Amazingly, this admirable film, which turned up at the Venice and Vienna Festivals of 1979, was made for TV and shot in nine or ten days for the equivalent of a hundred thousand dollars. Like all Paskaljević's films its special strength is the use of actors—here, in fact, non-professionals, chosen as a result of a competition. 'Actors make the atmosphere of a film. I enjoy working with non-professionals; and when I work with professional actors, I tend to use them as if they were themselves non-professionals. I can only work with people I know, and I always try to use their own experiences. In *Special Treatment* the actress who plays the mother who had lost her children had had the same experience in her own life; and the letter she reads so movingly on the screen was in fact a letter she had received from her own real-life children. She did not know I was going to give it her to read until she shot the scene... I let the actors change the scenario... But not too much.'

DAVID ROBINSON

1980: Obituary

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER '79: Darryl F. Zanuck; Richard Rodgers; Jon Hall, actor launched by *Hurricane* (1937), known for his loinclothed islanders and bare-chested sheiks.

JANUARY: Adolph Deutsch, composer, orchestrated *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *OklaHoma*; Colin Keith-Johnston, British stage actor (films: *Berkeley Square*, *Joan of Arc*, *The Left-Handed Gun*); Sir Charles Curran, Director General of the BBC, 1969-77; John Ivan Hoffman, director/art director, specialised in montage sequences (*San Francisco*), directed *The Crimson Canary*, *I Killed Geronimo*; Ivan Triesault, character actor specialising in Russians and Nazis (*Notorious*, *The Desert Fox*); Barbara Britton, actress (*Reap the Wild Wind*, *The Virginian*); Peppino De Filippo, Neapolitan clown (*Three-Cornered Hat*, *Boccaccio '70*), wrote some 40 comedies; Jimmy Durante, 'Schnozzle'; Lil Dagover, famous silent star (*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *Dr Mabuse*), abortive Hollywood career, subsequently returned to Germany (*Schlussakkord*); David Newell, stage and screen actor of 20s and 30s, later make-up artist after disfiguring accident; Jacques-Pierre Frégerais, French producer/distributor (*Le Jour se lève*), one of earliest promoters of Cannes; Luis Cuadrado, Spanish cameraman (*The Spirit of the Beehive*, *The Poachers*); James Poe, Oscar-winning screenwriter (*Around the World in 80 Days*, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*).

FEBRUARY: Albert Simonin, novelist and scriptwriter, collaborated with Marcel Carné, Henri Decoin; George Tobias, character actor (*Ninotchka*, *Sergeant York*); Gale Robbins, actress/singer, wartime pin-up (*Calamity Jane*); Jerry Fielding, composer, blacklisted 1953-61 (*The Wild Bunch*, *Straw Dogs*, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*); David Janssen; Stephen E. Dunn, RKO soundman (Oscars for *This Land Is Mine*, *The Bells of St. Mary's*); Katherine Emery, American actress (*Isle of the Dead*); Romolo Valli, actor (*The Leopard*, *Death in Venice*, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*).

MARCH: Olga Tschechowa, Russian-born actress, former sculptress, star of many Austrian and German films (*Burghtheater*, *Mascherade*); Louise Lovely, child star in Australia and New Zealand before moving to Hollywood in 1914; Steve Fisher, prolific short-story writer, screenwriter (*The Lady in the Lake*, *Johnny Angel*, for TV *Starsky and Hutch*, *Macmillan and Wife*); Arthur Kleiner, composer and accompanist (scored *I Am a Camera*); Kay Medford, wisecracking comedy actress (*Bye Bye Birdie*, *Funny Girl*, *Don't Drink the Water*);

OBITUARIES



Peter Sellers (in 'Being There');
Lewis Milestone.

Alexander Farciot Edouart, 10 Oscars for special effects/photographer, responsible for the parting of the Red Sea in *The Ten Commandments*; Dick Haymes, crooner with many film appearances; Jay Silverheels, born Harold J. Smith, Kemo Sabe's sidekick.

APRIL: Nicholas Phipps, British actor and screenwriter (collaborated on the *Doctor* series); Luella Gear, American comedienne (*Carefree*, *The Perfect Marriage*); Morris Stoloff, music director, Columbia Pictures, 1936-51 (*Cover Girl*, *Song Without End*); Charlotte Henry, 30s actress (Alice in Paramount's *Alice in Wonderland*); Kathleen Burke, Panther Woman in *Island of Lost Souls*; Tony Beckley, British character actor (*Chimes at Midnight*, *A Kind of Loving*); Alf Sjöberg; Helmut Kautner, German director (*Romanze in Moll*) who transferred to Hollywood in the 50s; Cecil Ford, producer, *The Guns of Navarone*; Antony Balch, distributor and film-maker; Cicely Courtneidge; Mario Bava; Alfred Hitchcock, George Pal.

MAY: Gene Markey, producer and screenwriter in 30s and 40s (produced Ford's *Wee Willy Winkie*); Ida Kaminska, Polish actress, star of *Shop on the High Street*; Kay Hammond, Elvira in stage and screen versions of *Blithe Spirit*; actor Hugh Griffith; John Collier, novelist and screenwriter (*Sylvia Scarlett*); Len Lye, innovating New Zealand-born animator of the 30s; director Henry Levin (*Where the Boys Are*); Hiroshi Inagaki, Japanese director, from silents on (*The Rickshaw Man*).

JUNE: Milburn Stone, much-used character player, for 20 years Doc Adams in TV's *Gunsmoke*; Victor Margutti, founder member of

ACTT, inventor of travelling matte process; James Blue; James Fitzpatrick, maker of travelogues; Odile Versois, actress sister of Marina Vlady (*A Day to Remember*, *Benjamin*); Helen Gahagan, actress (took the title role in *She*, 1935) who became a Congress-woman; Jose Iturbi, Spanish pianist/conductor, Cornel Wilde's hands in *A Song to Remember*; Reginald Gardiner, British actor specialising in foppish gentlemen (*Born to Dance*, *The Great Dictator*, *The Barefoot Contessa*); Boris Kaufman, Polish-born cameraman (*Zéro de Conduite*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*); Terence Fisher, director with many Hammer horror credits.

JULY: Gail Patrick, actress (*Artists & Models*, *My Favourite Wife*), turned producer (TV's *Perry Mason*); Peggy Knudsen, American actress (Mona Mars in *The Big Sleep*); Donald (Red) Barry, player in Republic Westerns of the 40s, star of *Red Ryder* series; Gregory Buckland Smith, British documentary/educational film-maker; Bobby Van, MGM actor/dancer of the 50s (*The Affairs of Dobie Gillis*, *Kiss Me Kate*); Dore Schary; Paddy Whannel, innovator in film education; Kenneth Tynan; critic Jan Dawson; Peter Sellers.

AUGUST: Strother Martin, swimming instructor turned character actor (*Cool Hand Luke*, *The Wild Bunch*); Frank Cordell, British composer (*Khartoum*, 2001); Charles McGraw, a distinguished heavy (*The Killers*, *The Narrow Margin*); Pascal Jardin, French novelist/scriptwriter (*Le Deuxième Souffle*, *Borsalino*); Carlo Tamberlani, Italian actor (*The Colossus of Rhodes*, *The Divine Creature*); scriptwriter Donald Ogden Stewart; Willi Forst; Elliott Nugent, director of *The Cat and the Canary*; Tex Avery, cartoonist; Yootha Joyce, British character actress.

SEPTEMBER: Duncan Renaldo, the Cisco Kid in the 50s TV series; Douglas Kennedy, character actor (*Northwest Mounted Police*, *Dark Passage*); Barbara O'Neill, Scarlett's mother in *Gone With the Wind*; Harold Clurman, stage director with Group Theatre, occasional films (*Deadline at Dawn*); Philip Dosse, owner/publisher of *Films and Filming*; Sol Lesser, producer of 13 Tarzan pictures; Louis Duquain, director of *Le Point du jour*, *Bel Ami*; Lewis Milestone.

OCTOBER: Ambrosine Philpotts, British character actress (*This Man Is Mine*, *The Captain's Table*); Zhao Dan, veteran Chinese actor who rode many political storms; Hattie Jacques.

NOVEMBER: Julian Wintle, British producer (*Tiger Bay*), co-founder in 1958 of Independent Artists; Steve McQueen; George Raft; Mae West; actress Rachel Roberts (*This Sporting Life*).

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COLOUR

1981 has apparently been designated as the year of the colour film. If this had not already been decided, in whatever quarters these things are arranged, Martin Scorsese would probably have ensured it, with his characteristically vociferous and well-publicised campaign to draw attention to the fast fading colour on the modern screen. By Scorsese's account, it's virtually fading away before our eyes. 'I have witnessed the deterioration and sometimes the destruction of most films I have seen. With the introduction of Eastman Kodak colour film in 1950, any hope for colour stability vanished. All films made in the Eastman colour process are about to deteriorate beyond repair. Some have already done so. Methods of restoration are so costly that if a film is not considered important it is left to die.' And, in Scorsese's terms, there are no such things as unimportant films: 'All film must be saved. No committees should decide which film lives or dies, whether or not TV commercials are less important than movie trailers ...' Followers of the late, great Henri Langlois would agree.

Scorsese has made his own new film, *Raging Bull*, in black and white, partly as a demonstration of his mistrust of colour. He apparently took a look at his own *New York, New York* and was shocked at the way the print appeared after only a few years. As a filmgoer, he tried for years to catch up with Visconti's *The Leopard*. When he finally saw it: 'It's pink. It's a pink leopard.' In one sense, the curious thing is that film-makers have only lately become so vigorously concerned about something that has hardly been a secret to laboratories, archives, or presumably movie companies. In a sober and detailed manual, *The Preservation and Restoration of Colour and Sound in Films*, prepared in 1977 by the International Federation of Film Archives, the issue is made quite clear: 'Nobody can foresee exactly how long a colour film will be copyable and showable ... It is, however, certain that after a few years colour films are very often not usable any more because of

gross changes of colour balance. One can say with certainty that dye-image films of any kind which are being stored without special measures of preservation will have only a short usable life. This has been proved true in practice and by scientific investigations carried out in the USSR and USA.' An article in *American Film* (November 1979) suggests that 'the life expectancy of a print made for theatrical projection was one or two years ... The life of the negative was seven to fifteen years, or twenty to twenty-five years if treated carefully.'

At places like the British Film Institute, questions of the preservation of colour films have been coming up with almost ritual regularity for something like twenty years at the times when annual budgets are discussed. A problem has been the even greater and more pressing need to secure the cinema's past by the transfer of nitrate film to acetate. (Colour will merely fade; nitrate, which means the first fifty years or so of cinema history, would be totally lost.) Our own National Film Archive has only quite recently persuaded the government to back a nitrate programme planned to complete the transfer by the end of this century—and this partly because of the sheer danger of keeping nitrate holdings. It would hardly have won the Treasury's heart by asking at the same time for even more money to secure its colour collection. Other archives are in many cases still fighting their battles for nitrate, or are simply under-funded. But the archives, along with the film companies and the makers of film stock, must now listen to a demonstrative, well-orchestrated and forceful campaign launched not in the muted museum atmosphere in which preservation is usually discussed, but by film-makers outraged at what they see as the likely fate of their own work.

The cause, and the cures, for the problem of colour fading are inevitably bound up with economics. Until the 1940s, 'colour' in Western cinema almost invariably meant Technicolor. Prints of old Technicolor films are of course subject to

the ills that befall all nitrate material; but the three-strip Technicolor system itself was a stable one, and although the colours will not last for ever they are not subject to any kind of rapid fading. In the early 1950s, the system changed. Bill O'Connell puts it succinctly in an article in *Film Comment* (September/October 1979), one of several informative articles in American magazines which predated the Scorsese campaign. 'Eastman Kodak announced the development of a "multi-layer" film which already contained the three dye-sensitive layers necessary for colour. This not only did away with the need for the bulky three-strip cameras, but also changed Hollywood's method of striking prints. Until then, Technicolor struck prints utilising the "imbibition" process, in which the three different colour dyes were each applied separately to the film base ... But with Eastman's new "multi-layer" film, colours could be obtained quicker and easier. Although the Eastman colour prints were inferior in quality to Technicolor's imbibition prints, they were less costly to produce and generally more economical in small print runs.'

The chemistry of colour film is by no means simple for the layman to follow; there are many factors involved, and of course there have been changes and advances in the last quarter of a century. But the basic problem of the instability of the now almost universal multi-layer system remains. (Eastman Kodak now has a somewhat more stable print stock. It would add several cents a foot to the cost of a print and is consequently not in use.) Unofficial information from Eastman Kodak, supplied to the Scorsese campaign, shows that movie colour stock has a shorter life expectancy than that used for photographs, and that within six years 'a 10 per cent colour density loss affecting one or more of the principal dyes' is predicted, though there is also a suggestion that a 10 per cent loss may not be too serious. But of course any imbalance in colour affects the whole, and if the blue and green fade the result will be an overall effect of magenta or

PROBLEM

pink (Visconti's 'pink leopard'). One of the more graphic quotations accompanying the Scorsese campaign stresses this: 'After only five years, the blue is leaving the waters [of *Jaws*] while the blood spurting from Robert Shaw's mouth gets redder and redder.'

'Permanence has never been a primary requirement of the motion picture industry,' colour researcher Henry Wilhelm has said. Certainly it was not a requirement of Hollywood in the 50s. The industry was already losing its audience to television, and was in a mood for economy; simultaneously, as part of the fight against television, it was moving into the colour age, so that colour was no longer a relative luxury reserved for musicals or historical dramas or films dependent on scenery but increasingly the norm for all studio production. Hollywood relied on quick turnover of a large-scale production, and it would be years before TV screenings, cassettes and the whole opening up of the re-release market alerted the studios to the commercial value of the past. In the 50s, consequently, an impermanent art turned cheerfully to an impermanent format. Eastman Kodak leased out its process (as Warner Color, DeLuxe Color, etc.) and it became more and more general. Technicolor itself moved away from the old methods. And, when it came to making prints, Technicolor gradually closed down its 'imbibition' plants. The Hollywood plant, according to Bill O'Connell, went in 1975, the London and Rome plants in 1978. Rather curiously, the only one now left is in Beijing. It was built by the Chinese on licence from Technicolor and under the supervision of Technicolor experts and opened in 1978.

For about a quarter of a century, therefore, a large proportion of the world's films have been made in a format with a built-in factor of impermanence. Not only features, of course, are involved. Collections of still photographs, such as magazine archives, are at risk, as are private snapshot albums. No one seems quite to know about the ultimate durability of video-tape, although it is not thought to be subject to colour fading; but television news reports, mostly shot on fast film, are just as vulnerable as features. The visual history of the century may also be beginning to fade away—a subject of even greater concern to some people than the potential damage to feature films. And the hazard, of course, is not confined to prints: 'I always thought the negative was inviolate,' says Bill O'Connell, 'kept in special safes in the sky. But I discovered that a lot of the films I thought were bad prints were actually new prints struck from faded negatives.'

Some films, it is argued, may already have gone beyond recall; some negatives may be quietly fading away in storage. The two well-known methods of preservation—apart from new and still experimental techniques involving computers, laser scanning, etc.—are by cold storage and by colour separation. Both are expensive enough to be beyond the resources of most archives, and even of many film companies.

'Deterioration in colour is the most serious threat to serious film-making in the world. It overwhelms the limitations of producers ... it should be a contract matter.'

Joseph Losey

'In ten years, the films I've made I'm sure will have vanished. The museums of the future will have lots of well preserved black and white films and nothing from our time.'

Nestor Almendros

'The print of "Elmer Gantry" was so bad that even I had trouble recognising some of the characters.'

Richard Brooks

'It has not been traditional for studio executives to preserve anything but their own jobs.'

Gordon Willis, quoted by Bill O'Connell

'We have been concerned with the preservation of all the material which came back from the Apollo flights both in film and video form ... If this material were lost to film-makers and historians it could constitute the most expensive loss in film history—if you compute the cost of reaching the moon and the documentation effort.'

Byron Morgan, NASA

Cold storage does not stop the fading process, though it very appreciably retards it. The National Film Archive has had cold storage vaults of modest capacity for some twenty years, but has been wary of the possible side-effects of extreme cold in causing shrinkage of the film or other problems. The Archive is now storing colour films at a temperature of +5° centigrade. The FIAF manual recommends -5°, but the NFA would rather not take a chance with irreplaceable material until more statistical information is available. 'From these matters of deep freezing and strong insulation, it is shown that the building of colour film vaults is not cheap,' the manual laconically states. Nor is cold storage cheap to maintain.

The FIAF manual suggests that 'the preservation of colour films in the form of colour separations is only to be recommended for films of particular artistic or documentary value.' Briefly, the process consists of making three black and white separations, one for each primary colour, plus a soundtrack. The colour will, as it were, be stored as black and white, and therefore will not fade; and the film can be reconstituted in colour from these separations. Theoretically simple, the process is evidently practically difficult, because of risks of shrinkage, lack of perfect balance, etc., and time-consuming. It is also heavy on storage space (each film taking up the area of four black and white films), and of course expensive. A *Variety* article published last summer estimates the cost at between \$15,000 and \$30,000 per film; an article in *Boxoffice* (April 1980) put it even higher—in any case, something that only the richest archives could contemplate, and then only for a very few films.

The series of articles in *Boxoffice* by R.M.M. Weiner includes interviews with

Hollywood executives about the work being done. Disney, as usual in these matters, has an exemplary record. Separations have apparently been made of all cartoons and live action features—one reason being that the studio has always regarded its products as a timeless resource, to be sold again every few years to a new generation. 'The major studios do make separations on some of their bigger boxoffice hits,' the *Boxoffice* writer was told. But 'not one studio has embarked upon a comprehensive policy of making separations for every film it releases.'

Martin Scorsese's campaign is being waged on several fronts. Part of it consists of a letter sent in June 1980 to Eastman Kodak, signed by an extraordinary assortment of film people (the first three signatures are Hal Ashby, Nestor Almendros and Michelangelo Antonioni; the last three, Robert Young, Howard Zieff and Vilmos Zsigmond). The letter is an urgent appeal to Eastman Kodak to 'find a solution to the problem ... to assume a major role in the research and development of a stable colour film stock.' Its language is firm, not to say threatening. 'We will not tolerate token gestures,' it says. 'If the problem is not remedied, we intend to use alternative means of production which are presently being explored and considered.' What those 'alternative means' might be is not clear. Making everything in black and white? Or on video-tape? Or in China?

Another idea is that film-makers should 'insist on the latest and best methods of preservation' at the time a film is made, and that this should be written in as a contractual obligation. Scorsese suggests that 'directors and studios, actors and distributors, writers and cameramen' should all contribute, and envisages one per cent of salaries being put towards the preservation purpose. But one might also assume that \$30,000 or \$40,000, however prohibitive to an archive, would be a small price to add to a film's production budget—a fraction of a total which will hardly be less than \$1.5m and could run to \$20m or more. Film preservation has not until recently been a fashionable issue, and archives have had to put up with scratched and worn prints, donated only after they have been through the mill of cinema projection. A clause which ensured, at the time a film went into production, that the needs of the future were taken into account, would be a major step forward.

Film-makers have the power to make themselves heard; and this demonstration of discontent has built up an impetus which suggests that it is not merely going to fade away, like the colour films themselves. The value of the campaign so far is in the precise questions it is asking, and in its sheer publicity value, bringing the issue to wide public notice. The eventual need, of course, is for what the FIAF manual describes as 'some nearly indestructible information medium'. Most people realised that film was vulnerable. Most of us did not realise that it was fading quite so fast, or that 'the special safe in the sky', in Bill O'Connell's phrase, was not a very safe place after all.

A Labyrinth of Subsidies

The Origins of the New German Cinema

JAN DAWSON

At the time of her death last year, Jan Dawson had begun to draft, after several years' research, the opening chapters of a history of the New German Cinema. The following abridged passages are taken from her introduction and first chapter, in which she locates the 'baptism' of the New German Cinema at the 1962 Oberhausen Short Film Festival, and then untangles the subsequent history of state finance to the film industry. The thrust of her argument—which has been previously acknowledged, but not set out, in English at least, in such detail—is that, after only a short time, the new generation of filmmakers who gathered under the colours of the Oberhausen Manifesto found themselves out-manoeuvred in the battle for state subsidy by the industry's more politically astute old guard. She also details the failure of the government to address itself to the key issue of commercial distribution.

In 1961, a survey of the West German film industry revealed a dismal prospect: the 69 feature films made that year constituted the lowest annual production since 1952; there was a record decline in the exhibition of German films in the Federal Republic itself (they captured only 28.5 per cent of the market); and cinema admissions dropped by over 14 million, decisively confirming the steady decline of the previous four years. The Ministry of the Interior, the *Bundesministerium des Innern*, reacted by announcing that, in April 1962, it was inaugurating a new scheme for grants to 'feature film projects, scripts and script outlines'.

The Oberhausen Festival in February that year seemed the perfect platform from which a group of 26 young people working in film (if not exactly within the film industry) could catch the attention of the press and the Ministry. Frustrated and restricted, they believed that such government money as was already being used to subsidise feature films—largely through guaranteed back credits and quality awards—was falling into the wrong hands and being used to create the wrong kind of films. Astutely, the Oberhausen Manifesto—see top of facing page—

managed to combine radicalism with an appeal to both nationalism and commercialism. Unfortunately, Jan Dawson believed, it also set a precedent for the confusion of commercial and cultural ambitions embodied in every subsequent piece of film legislation.



1968: Edgar Reitz, Alexander Kluge.

MOST EFFORTS TO define the New German Cinema are governed by half true clichés; and one of these (to which this writer basically subscribes) is that its conception dates from the Oberhausen Manifesto. True, the declaration represents the first bid by those creatively involved in the making of films to arrogate to themselves the economic control traditionally vested in non-creative producers. But the expression of a wish to own or control the means of production is not necessarily synonymous with any particular ideological conviction or any single aesthetic programme. Where truth and legend part company is in the retroactive reading of the text as evidence of such a conviction. Far from being a sign of organised group activity, the Manifesto in fact constituted virtually the *total* of that activity; united only in their frustrations and ambitions, its signatories lacked any common plan of campaign.

Ironically, since the Golden Mean of legislated consensus was subsequently to create a new set of frustrations for Germany's highly individualistic filmmakers, the Manifesto was the first

attempt at a consensus statement for a new German cinema. The text was obviously drafted by a committee, and its vagueness reveals the small measure of the unanimity behind it. Vigorous verbs, by energetic implication, lend an illusory precision to a miscellany of abstract nouns. Since a myth persists that the economic opportunities which made possible the renaissance of the *auteur* film in Germany grew out of the solidarity and coherence of the filmmakers themselves, it's important to set this key event in a non-Utopian perspective. With the benefit of hindsight, Edgar Reitz, one of the few Oberhausen signatories to have achieved and maintained the shared dream of becoming a feature film-maker, vividly evokes the excitements and hazards of these first attempts at collective action.*

'I was one of the original Oberhausen group of 26 directors. We all called ourselves directors, although from the start there were people who had never made a film of their own and didn't want to make one. One was a composer, two were cameramen, there was also an actor. I'd got to know these people about six months previously in Munich; until then, I'd made short films and had no contact with other film-makers. I didn't know anybody, and I think that was true for most of the others—that they had no professional contacts.

'Our initiative was inspired by what had happened in the French cinema. The *nouvelle vague* and the slogan "le cinéma de papa est mort". Through a friend, a film critic on the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, I got to know the others. They had tiny green stickers with the slogan "Papa's Kino ist tot" printed up on sheets, like postage stamps, and we all stuck them on our letters ... and also in cafés, on lavatory seats, etc. It was an incredible feeling: we stuck them on trees, on pavements ... and we didn't actually know what we meant by them. Not exactly. We only knew that there were no films being

*Interviewed by Jan Dawson, Berlin, November 1978.

THE OBERHAUSEN MANIFESTO

'The collapse of the conventional German cinema finally deprives a mentality we reject of its economic justification. As a result, the new film has a chance of coming to life. In the last few years, German short films by young writers, directors and producers have collected many prizes at international festivals and won international critical recognition. These works and their success show that the future of the German cinema lies with those who have proved they speak a new film language. As in other countries, the short film in Germany has become a school and testing ground for the feature film. We are staking our claim to create the new German feature film. This film requires new freedoms. Freedom from the usual conventions of the established industry. Freedom from the restrictive influence of commercial partners. Freedom from the tutelage of other vested interests. We have concrete notions about the ideas, forms and economic structures which could produce the new German cinema. We are collectively prepared to assume the economic risks. The old film is dead. We believe in the new.'

28 February 1962

produced in Germany that interested us; and that what touched us were the films coming out of France. The first films by Godard, Malle, Truffaut. On the one hand, the stickers were a kind of *homage* to the French cinema; and on the other, they signified that the makers of short films were sitting down together and talking to one another. It was through these conversations that we dared for the first time to admit that we dreamed of making feature films.

'On our own, most of us would never have dared to voice this dream. It was such a tough time, the film industry was such a closed business. And suddenly there were twenty or thirty people sitting in a Chinese restaurant in Munich. I think maybe we met ten times altogether, and during these get-togethers we discovered that, together, we dared to give destiny a nudge. So, out of these conversations came the plan to publish some kind of statement. Because we had also found out something else: our short films had already achieved a cultural status of which we ourselves were unaware. One day we simply made a list of all the prizes we'd won at international festivals, and realised that we had already attracted more attention abroad than all the German feature films. And that was probably the most important conscious discovery we made through our collective experience.

'The stir that we caused at Oberhausen had an effect on us as well. As a result of the discussions about film policy which occurred over the next few years, we were obliged to organise and to develop our ideas. And politically we weren't up to it. We didn't have a clue. We were such a motley collection of individuals, so busy with our egos and our own images, that we had no concept of film politics. The one concept which did develop was that of an *auteur* cinema. And the one person who played an absolutely essential role during those years was Alexander Kluge.

'Kluge was characterised in the press as the group's chief ideologue, and from the start there was a certain friction. He unsuccessfully tried to enlighten the

group, to give it a political consciousness, but there were always hostilities within the group. It was important that this shouldn't become public knowledge, and that's one reason why Kluge often did the political lobbying on his own. Which also gave a few people complexes. They were afraid that the money we were asking the state to provide wouldn't go to everyone, and that Kluge would, as it were, have some influence in determining how it was spent. So people started working against one another, as soon as things moved from the general to the particular. In other words, where broad-based campaigns were concerned, we were united; but as soon as it was a question of working concretely—making or preparing a film—then we often worked against one another. Peter Schamoni, for example, was the first to withdraw from the group because he was evidently afraid that he wouldn't get subsidy money if he stayed. That's one side of the Oberhausen story.'

Reitz's outline of this aspect of the Oberhausen story is scarcely surprising. Unlike the new French directors whom they so admired, the Oberhausen generation, isolated from one another in their modest professional activities as filmmakers, lacked not only the practical experience of working together on so much as a magazine, but also the forum for pooling and developing their ideas which *Cahiers du Cinéma* had represented for the French. Which is not to suggest that the *nouvelle vague* was, in either its inception or expression, a political movement (its political preoccupations being largely confined to the *politique des auteurs*), but simply that it was a movement, at least in its early stages. The trust and friendship born of a collectively developed aesthetic were strong enough to prompt its exponents, during those same early stages, to assist one another in raising budgets, mostly within the private sector.

The basic competitiveness of the aspiring young Germans is also not surprising when one considers that what loosely united them was simply a common desire

for individual self-expression. In this respect, their interests—or self-interests—might be seen as parallel rather than identical: they were impatient to work as artists; but (with the ever-honourable and far-sighted exception of Alexander Kluge, who was also a qualified lawyer) were unaware that being an artist, especially in an expensive medium, already represents a political position; or that, in order to become artists, they might first need to become politicians. Individualism was, after all, a major element of the literary and philosophical inheritance they were anxious to reclaim. Furthermore, their country's recent and traumatic history had provoked, perhaps, a deep mistrust of unqualified adherence to any collective ideal.

Less contentiously, the causes of the suspicions which would swiftly fragment this flimsily united group were already apparent in the text—part credo and part declaration of war—in which they voiced their solidarity. Because much of the Manifesto's rhetoric has a faintly socialist tinge, it has generally been supposed that its signatories, however ill-defined their programme, were fired by the same altruistic fervour. Yet it could be argued that some of them ('the future lies with those who have proved they speak a new film language') were merely pleading for a new career structure with better promotion prospects; or even more cynically (and the subsequent track-records of many of the signatories could reinforce this view), that the Manifesto was as much a petition from the unemployed as from the un- or under-employed.

Either way, their crusading rhetoric helped gloss over a glaring inconsequence in their argument. The high-minded boast that they were 'collectively prepared to assume the economic risks' concealed the bald fact that they lacked, both individually and collectively, the resources to do so. Whatever money would be at risk, it would not be theirs. Neither would it be on the scale that their Utopian dreams were made of.

'...The dumb answer I got from the distribution

A GLOSSARY TO THE NEW GERMAN CINEMA

Arbeitsgemeinschaft neuer deutschen Spielfilmproduzenten

The Syndicate of New German Feature Film Producers, founded in 1966 in the run up to the Film Development Act.

Berthold Martin Plan

First version of the 1967 Film Development Act, named after the CDU chairman of the Committee for Cultural Policies.

Bundesministerium des Innern

Until the passage of the Film Development Act, the Ministry of the Interior was the main source of direct subsidy to the Federal Republic's film industry.

Besonders wertvoll

'Special merit' award by Film Assessment Bureau, entitling a producer to relief from entertainment tax.

Filmbewertungsstelle (FBW)

The federal Film Assessment Bureau at Wiesbaden has since 1955 made 'quality' awards to German films.

Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA)

The Film Development Board was founded, following the Film Development Act, to administer the Filmgroschen funds (see below), and also, after a 1971 Amendment, to make discretionary subsidies to 'good entertainment films'.

Filmförderungsgesetz (FFG)

The Film Development Bill, became law on 22 December 1967. By instituting a scheme of retrospective subsidies based on box-office returns it effectively undercut the advances made by the Oberhauseners.

Filmgroschen

A 10-pfennig levy on every cinema seat sold in the Federal Republic, used to finance film subsidies. The levy was increased in 1974 to 15 pfennigs.

Filmverlag der Autoren

Conceived in 1971 as a production collective, the Filmverlag (literally: the Authors' Film Publishers) was by 1973 devoting itself solely to distribution.

Institut für Filmgestaltung

The Institute for Film Formation, the Federal Republic's first film school, founded in Ulm in 1966 by Reitz and Kluge.

Kuratorium junger deutscher Film

Government funded organisation, the Board of Curators of the Young German Film, founded in 1965 to subsidise the work of young film-makers.

Spitzenorganisation der Filmwirtschaft (SPIO)

The Central Organisation of the commercial film industry.

Wertvoll

A 'merit' award from the FBW (see above: *besonders wertvoll*).

The Kuratorium

By the end of 1966, the dream none the less seemed set fair to become a reality. The Oberhausen Manifesto had hit its targets, making an enormous impact on policy-makers and press alike, and creating a demand for an indigenous *auteur* cinema among a wider circle than the film-makers alone. The Manifesto, at least as Kluge later interpreted it, had fundamentally been a demand for the creation of two new categories of opportunity: for young film-makers to enter a virtually closed industry through a guaranteed chance of proving their talent with a first feature film; and for them to acquire a knowledge of film—its theory and history as well as its practice—which would enable them to attract international audiences. To give this second, educational opportunity practical shape, Kluge and Edgar Reitz swiftly launched the *Institut für Filmgestaltung* (Institute for Film Formation) in Ulm, West Germany's first film school. It was, as Reitz describes it, guided by that same mixture of crusading and academic spirit which characterises so much of Kluge's creative work. 'This idea, that a new generation needed a new formation and that the student-teacher relationship had to be abolished, applied to us as well: we were also students in our own school. It was extraordinary that we succeeded in setting up that institute without money, without state subsidy, without professional help of any kind.'

Soon, however, the Ulm film school's work was to be indirectly subsidised, in that its student films received public funding. For February 1965 saw the setting up of an organisation which seemed custom-made to create the opportunities for which the Oberhauseners had lobbied. The *Kuratorium junger deutscher Film* was set up as an autonomous, non-profit-making society not tied to any political interests. Although the constitution of the Federal Republic vested responsibility for education and the arts in the separate Federal states, the *Länder*, the demand, both from film-makers and from anxious economists, was for a new *German* cinema. The slumping statistics of the last few years indicated that the German cinema was already in danger of becoming a national cottage industry; and the last thing any interest group wanted at this point was that it should also become a regional one. The Kuratorium's brief was 'to advance German film-making and stimulate a renewal of the German film in a manner exclusively and directly beneficial to the community.' Funds came from a Federal source, the Ministry of the Interior, which granted a working capital of 5 million DM to cover the first three years of operation. The projects to which this

money was to be allocated, in the form of production advances, were to be determined by an elected selection committee.

Conceived in the free spirit of Oberhausen, the Kuratorium constitution and procedures were designed to keep bureaucracy to a minimum. Its administrative staff was tiny, and membership was open to any citizen who supported its aims. Composed primarily of young film critics, the Kuratorium's first selection committee eagerly set about the unobstructed implementation of the aims formulated at Oberhausen. To ensure that the film-makers really did retain artistic control over their work, the Kuratorium contracts made it highly favourable for directors to become their own producers and form their own production companies. And the substantial funds available in these first heady years enabled the Kuratorium to allocate as much as 300,000 DM for the production of a first feature film.

In its first two years, effectively 1966 and 1967, the Kuratorium funded 26 short and feature films of which 17 (by a total of ten students) were productions of the Ulm institute. It also financed first features by Kluge, *Abschied von Gestern* (*Yesterday Girl*), and Reitz, *Mahlzeiten* (*Mealtimes*). Two of the remaining seven features were directed by Oberhausen signatories: *Katz und Maus*, by Hans Jürgen Pohland, and *Der sanfte Lauf*, by Haro Senft; and two more, *Professor Columbus*, by Rainer Erler, and *Tätowierung*, by Johannes Schaaf, were produced by the Oberhausen signatory Rob Houwer.

The first of the features, *Yesterday Girl*, managed something no German film had achieved in more than twenty years by carrying off the Silver Lion at the 1966 Venice Film Festival. The following year, Edgar Reitz's *Mahlzeiten* received the Best First Feature Award at Venice, and in 1968 Kluge's second feature took the top prize, the Golden Lion. Nor were the Kuratorium's new directors without honour in their own country. Since 1955, when it became a centralised federal institution at Wiesbaden, the Film Assessment Bureau, the *Filmbewertungsstelle* (FBW), a body whose composition often inclined its taste to the safe and the conservative, had been responsible for awarding quality ratings to German productions. Although the Bureau's brief was to acknowledge 'artistic merit', there were sound economic reasons for conforming to its notions of art, since the label *besonders wertvoll* (of special merit) or *wertvoll* (of merit) entitled a producer to substantial relief from the entertainment tax normally levied on the box-office take. Not only did nine of the Kuratorium's first twenty films receive both financial and artistic encouragement in the form of *besonders wertvoll* certificates, but between 1967 and 1969 four films produced by the Kuratorium between them collected 1.5 million

boss was, roughly, that prizes kill audiences.'

DM of the 2.1 million DM awarded in prizes by the Ministry of the Interior, and given to the production companies to be reinvested in quality work.* As the Ministry was also the body which, through the Kuratorium, had awarded them their production funds in the first place, there was a sense in which the Ministry might be seen as rationalising its investment.

It was evident that the Oberhausen-Kuratorium axis was achieving the cultural quality which the Ministry had hoped to stimulate, and at the same time coming fairly close to obtaining a monopoly on state subsidies. In their first productive euphoria, the Kuratorium-backed film-makers naively assumed that they might continue to do this without encountering increasing opposition.

Reitz again: 'In one year, 1965-66, around ten first feature films were made, which meant that there were ten people under serious consideration. But even among them, there was a serious, unavoidable rivalry. The distributors—and for us, at the time, that really meant Constantin Film—weren't interested in all ten films, but only wanted four or five of them. So right from the start, half the films produced with public money were left on the shelf. No one making a film could know whether his picture had any chance with the press or the distributors or anywhere else. Rivalry and fear came into play. And that weakened our position as a film policies lobby.'

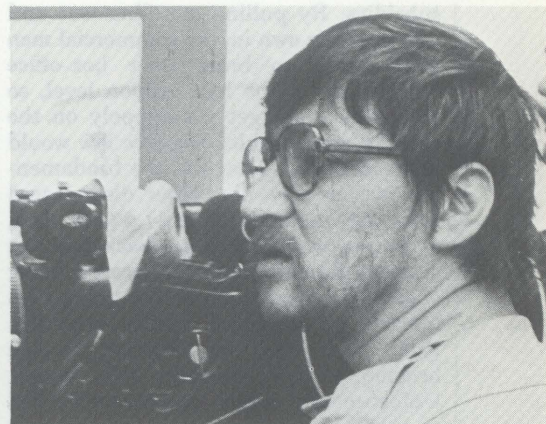
Moreover, the original conception of the Kuratorium was short-sighted in two crucial respects. First, there was no automatic progression from first feature to second. Unless a Kuratorium-backed film-maker was lucky enough to be one of the two or three who obtained major Ministry prizes, he would have to rely for funding of his second film on one of the shrinking commercial sources. The terms of the Kuratorium award might encourage him (or her) to aim for idiosyncratic self-expression; but the realities of the market-place made other demands, and for those who couldn't meet the twin requirements of art and commerce in a single first feature, the future might still look bleak. The second structural weakness concerned not the long-term development of individual film-makers, but the survival of the very institution which funded them. The Kuratorium's initial generous funding was intended to be distributed in the form of interest-free production advances, or loans, from whose repayment further productions could be backed. Although the first films did well, they did not do all that well. The Kuratorium was never able to reclaim much of its investment, and by 1967 its coffers were fast emptying.

Nevertheless, to the lucky few the gathering storm clouds still remained invisible. Reitz recalls both the first flush of ingenuous rapture and the rude awakening. 'After Oberhausen, people had been looking forward for three years to the appearance of the first feature films. The press was unbelievably positive. And when the first films came out, there was a degree of public interest which has never been matched since. Films like *Abschied von Gestern*, or my own *Mahlzeiten*, attracted audiences of over a million. That's something which doesn't happen any more. Not even the biggest success of recent years, Schlöndorff's *Katharina Blum*, attracted that sort of audience. It was an extraordinarily hopeful beginning; and within eighteen months or so it was over.

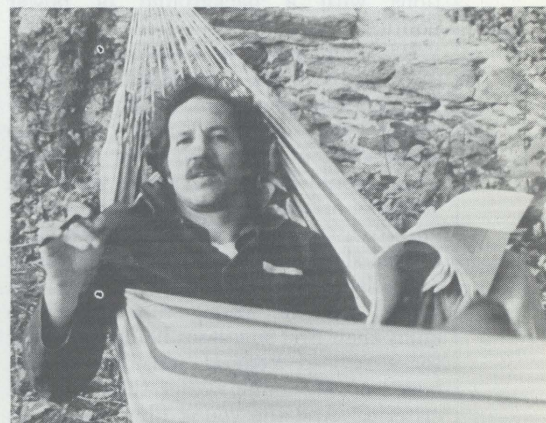
'I was particularly proud to win a prize at Venice for *Mahlzeiten* because I was standing next to Buñuel on the stage: he was awarded a prize for "the last film of his life", which was how he'd presented *Belle de Jour*, and I was awarded the prize for the best first film. The feeling was that from now on everything was going to change. And when I got back from the Festival, the distributors had pulled out my film. I called to ask why it was no longer showing anywhere, because the Venice prize had attracted press coverage and could have been a big publicity boost: and the dumb answer I got from the distribution boss, in a German slang which is virtually untranslatable, was, roughly, that "prizes kill audiences". That wasn't the real reason, but it was a year before we saw what had happened.

'During that first year, all the old hands from the commercial film industry had formed their lobby in Bonn. And they naturally had far greater possibilities than we did of influencing film policies, both because they had functioning offices and staff, and because they weren't producing anything. We were producing, and we weren't around. We were amazed to discover that a hard and fast concept for a revised subsidies policy had been drafted and was already under consideration by the political parties. We realised that we, too, had to organise fast in order to influence the new law. We founded the Syndicate of New German Feature Film Producers, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft neuer deutschen Spielfilmproduzenten*, to counteract the commercial lobby. The Film Development Act was finalised at the end of 1967, one year after the success of our first films.

'There's a significant economic point in this. The Act specifies that any film grossing more than half a million DM in its first two years is entitled to subsidy money. And that rule can only work retroactively. In other words, the films exhibited in the previous year provide the index to what will be subsidised in the following year. Had our films been widely exhibited and competing at the box-office, we'd have got most of the



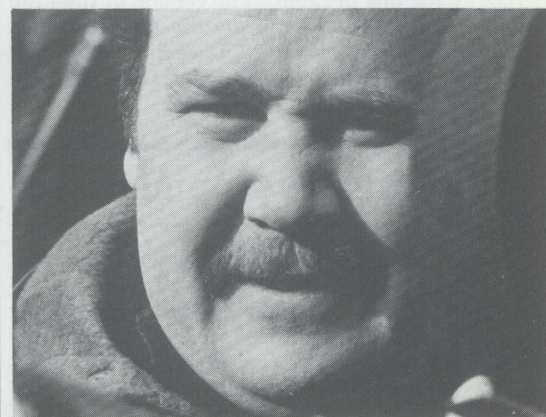
Rainer Werner Fassbinder.



Werner Herzog.



Wim Wenders.



Johannes Schaaf.

**Abschied von Gestern*, 350,000 DM; *Tätowierung*, 400,000 DM; *Lebenszeichen* (Signs of Life, Werner Herzog), 350,000 DM; *Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern* (Peter Fleischmann), 350,000 DM and 50,000 DM.

'The young film-makers turned round and went to work ...'

subsidies. By pulling our films out and putting their own in, the commercial men were trying to bring their box-office receipts up to the half million level, so that they could get a monopoly on the subsidy money which the new law would make available. That was the fundamental reason why our films disappeared from the cinemas after only a year. And, of course, we couldn't get back into the cinemas the following year because, being eligible for hardly any of the production money, we produced hardly anything. From that day on, German cinema became a fight between two camps. Unfortunately, it was waged as a conflict of cultures and generations, not seen as a problem deriving from economic relations with a background of power politics.'

Reitz's analysis is supported by the facts, even if his chronology is a trifle blurred. The young film-makers had certainly been naive to assume that the established industry, however impoverished, would lie down and die without a struggle, or that it would offer no resistance to a scheme which transferred such a large share of state funds to the young auteurs. But the industry had not waited for the young film-makers to enjoy their first successes before lobbying for a revised Federal subsidies system based on economic rather than cultural criteria.* And the young film-makers, in their capacity as producers, had not waited until the summer of 1967 to found their own umbrella organisation. The Arbeitsgemeinschaft neuer deutschen Spielfilmproduzenten (board member, Alexander Kluge, with whose company, Kairos Film, it shared its offices) was actually founded in 1966, when the film-makers recognised that their own best interests would not be represented by SPIO in discussions of the imminent new legislation. At this time, they rallied public opinion against a first version of the new law known as the Berthold Martin Plan, after the member of the right wing CDU who was then chairman of the Committee for Cultural Policies. But as Kluge has commented, 'The young film-makers turned round and went to work, while the commercial lobby stayed on the starting line in Bonn.' The version of the Film Bill, the *Filmförderungsgesetz*, which became law on 22 December 1967 was substantially no different from the plan defeated the previous year.

Film Development Act

Under the Film Development Act, most of the money for film subsidies was no longer to come direct from the Ministry but was to be raised via a 10-pfennig levy (*Filmgroschen*) on every cinema ticket sold in West Germany and West Berlin.

*This was mainly done through SPIO, the central organisation of the film industry.

This meant, of course, that a virtually bankrupt industry with falling attendances was responsible for subsidising its own future development: one possible reason, besides inflation, why the levy was raised to 15 pfennig when the Act was revised in 1974. It also provided a new, self-justifying and circular argument for using popular taste rather than indefinable cultural standards as the criterion for official investment: subsidies could be a question of giving the audience what they wanted to pay for.

A new federal institution, the Film Development Board or *Filmförderungsanstalt* (FFA), was set up to administer the funds thus raised, initially around 15 million DM a year. But although the basis of FFA funding was economic, some concessions were made to the well-publicised dream of 'quality cinema' (reflected in the Board's muddled brief 'to raise the quality of the German cinema on a broad basis'), in that films which had either won a major prize at a major international festival or which had received an official quality rating in Germany were required to gross only 300,000 DM before entitling their producers to funding for their next film. In 1971 the sum was reduced to 100,000 DM; but this of course still meant that obtaining distribution was a prerequisite for obtaining a retroactive subsidy. The Film Assessment Bureau—whose power had declined along with the entertainment tax—now re-emerged as a powerful body.

In addition to these 'automatic' forms of state aid, the FFA was also empowered—by a 1971 Amendment to the film law—to make discretionary cash subsidies (supplementary awards) to 'good entertainment films' which had played to the requisite number of paying patrons. These 'entertainment ratings', paralleling the quality ratings of the FBW, were to be bestowed by a nine-man FFA committee of representatives of the government, the Lower House and the churches, as well as of SPIO and the established associations of distributors and cinema owners. Since the FBW's membership also numbered a high percentage of public servants, its notions of 'quality' could prove as restricted and restricting as the FFA's notions of entertainment. Straub's *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* was initially denied a quality rating vital to its makers' professional survival at the same time that the state, through its automatic subsidies system, was helping to finance the production of cheap thrillers and sex films, although the new laws contained a vigorously contested morality clause specifying that 'films which offend against the laws or which are harmful to moral or religious feelings are ineligible for subsidy.' This did not prevent the FFA from retroactively sponsoring a swelling wave of titillatory *Report* films and lumpenly comic encounters between boorish schoolboys and witless teachers.



'The commercial lobby stayed on the starting line in Bonn.'

The modest box-office requirements of the new incentives scheme—along with the ceiling on the awards of up to 250,000 DM or half the production costs—encouraged commercial producers to go for the low-cost quickies rather than fewer, bigger and better films. One immediate impact of the new laws was a dramatic increase in the volume of domestic product. Whereas in 1967 a total of 72 German films and co-productions had been premiered in Germany, this figure rose to 110 by 1969, and reached a record of 112 in 1971 before beginning a downward spiral which reached its nadir of 51 in 1977. For despite the fact that the new film law was aimed at an *economic* revival of the industry, its implementation did nothing to halt the steady decline in attendance figures and the no less steady closure of exhibition outlets. The 215.6 million cinema tickets sold in West Germany and West Berlin in 1967 dropped by 16.9 per cent to 179.1 million in the following year, and continued to drop until 1977, when an increase of 7.9 per cent brought the total up to 124.2 million. The 4,518 cinemas still open at the end of 1967 had dropped to 3,171 by 1972 and to 3,072 by 1977.

As the FFA's retroactive awards to producers were for a maximum 50 per cent of their successful film's production costs, one effect of the new law was the re-emergence in the economic power seat of the non-creative rather than the independent producers, since the former were in a stronger position to raise the remainder of the budget. More to the point, they were also in a better position to qualify for the awards in the first place, since they had a long-established professional relationship with the distributors and exhibitors, without whom no film could fulfil the attendance requirement. (15 of the 26 films to qualify for automatic awards in 1972 were produced by the same three companies, which between them also collected three of six awards made that year for 'good entertainment'.)

For the independent film-makers, the last serious hope of subsidy was now the Ministry of the Interior, which in 1967 distributed 1.8 million DM in advances to projects of cultural interest, as well as 950,000 DM in prize money to features already made. Its project awards were on a scale of 200,000 DM per feature project and 300,000 DM for a first feature, which enabled it to back some six or seven feature-length projects a year. The modest scale of these awards (in terms of feature film production costs) meant that 'quality' film-makers less thrifty than Fassbinder were forced either to accept a permanent, semi-underground and definitely marginal place on the film scene, or to find additional sources of funding—a necessity which, by placing them under a degree of constraint to be commercially entertaining, might eventually jeopardise their chances of collecting further quality awards. For the uncompromising, it

became a question of surviving from prize to prize and dreading the day when their notions of quality no longer coincided with those of the official juries.

With the passing of the new law, the Ministry of the Interior also ceased to fund the Kuratorium directly. Responsibility for the development of cultural quality was, amid much parliamentary speechifying, handed back to the individual federal states who, on 3 June 1969, agreed that, beginning on 1 January 1970, they would between them provide the Kuratorium with an annual budget of 750,000 DM, a reduction which compelled the Kuratorium to distribute smaller sums to fewer film-makers, but which did enable it, in the following year, to contribute to the first feature films by Ula Stöckl (*Das goldene Ding*), Wim Wenders (*Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter/The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*), Christian Ziewer (*Liebe Mutter, mir geht es gut*) and Max Willutzki (*Der lange Jammer*).

The names of the recipients are significant: while Stöckl had been a student at Ulm, Wenders was among the first class to graduate from the Munich Film School, and Ziewer and Willutzki had both been students at the Berlin Film School from its first year of operation. Both the Munich and Berlin schools were state-financed; both were training students to work in films or television; and together they were annually turning out a greater number of potential film-makers than the state-subsidised cinema industry could support. In other words, despite the existence of a number of official schemes to promote the development of talent, the situation in West Germany was not that different from anywhere else. There were disaffected people, convinced that their talent was being thwarted by unfair and unimaginative subsidy schemes, at a time when to many outside observers it seemed that Germany was a land flowing with the milk and honey of state aid.

Once the limitations of the 1967 film law began to be felt, the Ministry of the Interior and the Kuratorium swiftly became aware of the futility of continuing to produce work which was unable to reach an audience. From April 1970, the Ministry began awarding cash prizes to cinema-owners whose theatres had, over the previous year, programmed what was defined as a 'suitable quota' of (suitable) German films. By the end of 1978, 290 such awards, totalling 3 million DM, had been made to a total of 92 cinemas. And meanwhile, from December 1976, the Ministry inaugurated a scheme of distribution awards, allocated to companies for the distribution of specific 'quality' films. The Kuratorium itself, as early as 1971, had decided to divert its own funds into distribution subsidies to help with the costs of prints and publicity; and went on to give grants to those venues (film clubs as well as cinemas) whose



Some of the first films funded by the Kuratorium. Top to bottom: Schaaf's 'Tätowierung'; Alexandra Kluge in her brother's 'Yesterday Girl' (left); Fleischmann's 'Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern' (right); Reitz's 'Mahlzeiten'; Herzog's 'Signs of Life'.

'The aim was . . . to make films for television with which we could then do what we wanted.'

programming had maintained a consistently high level. Public demand for Kuratorium products had by now subsided, and as independent cinema once again became low-budget and more marginal, the grants would often go towards such purposes as the installation of 16mm equipment.

Although there were very few duplicated awards, since the Kuratorium was more concerned with the down-market, non-commercial end of independent exhibition, some three cinemas did manage to obtain funds in the same year from both the Kuratorium and the Ministry of the Interior. Like the Ministry, the Kuratorium decided that financial support for distribution and exhibition should be a permanent part of its work in 'stimulating the cultural development of the German cinema', and at the end of 1972, it decided in future to devote two-thirds of its funds to production grants and one third to distribution and exhibition. This meant that the Kuratorium now had only half a million DM a year to devote to the production of first feature films, and in 1974 it placed a ceiling of 120,000 DM on any single award. Debutant directors with ambitions to emerge from the underground were constrained to seek co-production funds—from the Ministry, from television or from those commercial partners from whom the Oberhauseners had clamoured to be free.

The Filmverlag

The auteur cinema which emerged after Oberhausen owed its existence almost entirely to state investment—as, for that matter, did that branch of the German film industry concerned with popular entertainment. It would be misleading, however, to imply that the film-makers expected to be spoon-fed at all stages of their work, or that they took no initiatives themselves to improve their situation.

There were attempts by film-makers to find their own way into the cinemas without the machinery of a commercial distributor behind them. But the most significant and lasting of the film-makers' enterprises was the *Filmverlag der Autoren* (literally: the Authors' Film Publishers), which was created in 1971. Originally conceived as a production collective by the film-makers who set it up, the Filmverlag was by 1973 devoting its energies solely to distribution. The founders of this self-help organisation (which in 1977 only salvaged itself from bankruptcy by selling a majority shareholding to *Der Spiegel* proprietor Rudolph Augstein) included Wim Wenders, R. W. Fassbinder, Hans Geissendörfer and Uwe Brandner, who here describes its early history.

'At the time we started Filmverlag, we were trying to avoid dealing with the

mafia of the "percentage producers", who grew fat on the film subsidies scheme. They aren't like the old-fashioned type of producers, who at least were interested in what they called "the product". They are simply book-keepers, and they put all their energy into saving on the postage stamps because they don't really care what the end product is like, since they know that it's scheduled to flicker away on the TV set on a particular evening. The only qualification these people have for calling themselves producers is a large enough bank balance to enable them to obtain loans for the money which television has agreed to pay them in instalments.

'Our initial trick with Filmverlag was that about twenty of us got together, each of us answerable for 15,000 DM, to turn ourselves into a limited liability company, just so that we could go to television and say, "We're the production company, you can make the contract with us. We've got ten people here prepared to guarantee a particular project." The aim was to get the money without strings attached; in other words, to make films for television with which we could then do what we wanted. Like, for instance, getting them into the cinemas, which at first was only sporadically possible, because after they'd been transmitted no distributor would have been prepared to take on this sort of film. Which started us thinking that we had better set up our own distribution company as well, and we inaugurated that with my first feature, *Ich liebe Dich, ich töte Dich* (*I Love You, I Kill You*, 1971).

'Both the film-making and the distribution were exceptionally free from constraints. I'd had a script award from the Ministry, so there wasn't in fact any TV money in the production. The film was only really distributed outside Germany, however, because I'd gone over budget and had to sell it to television in order to pay off the debts. At that time, that meant the film could only run for six weeks in a cinema before being shown on TV; indeed, my film was the first one to be given even that much leeway under a new ruling, because prior to that when a completed feature film was sold to television, it had to be transmitted before it could be screened at all in the cinema. *Ich liebe Dich* . . . did very well for its six weeks, but afterwards that was virtually the end of it.

'So then Filmverlag began trying to continue in this hybrid role of producer/distributor, but it was soon apparent that we couldn't even cover the costs of all the work involved. Our original idea had been somewhat arrogant: we'd thought that if we could combine domestic distribution and foreign sales and contracted productions with German television in a single organisation, we would have a viable operation which would enable us to get on with making films and to enjoy a little continuity in

developing as film-makers. But financially it simply didn't work. In retrospect, it's easy to say that we made wrong decisions: it was a learning process for everyone involved, because we were often having to function in areas where we didn't have a clue. Apart from the job of film director, there wasn't a single post that was professionally filled: the book-keeping and the office work were undertaken by inexperienced people, and there was no one who had a grip on the overall situation . . . Learning is usually a coercive experience, and once the first euphoria wore off, what followed—apart from the regrouping of the Filmverlag which is still going on today—was the isolation of the film-makers from one another. Which I personally wouldn't see as an entirely negative thing.*

Brandner's account of the birth of Germany's most resourceful distribution company, while affirming the auteur cineastes' shared dream of getting their films on to cinema screens, also indicates the dependence of independent film-makers on a new source of financing. It is evident that by 1971 television—in its multiple roles of producer, co-producer, commissioning body and exhibitor—had already become an inescapable factor in every film-maker's calculations; and that the struggle was now to wrest from television those deals which would be the least detrimental to their films' chances in Germany's remaining cinemas.

Television possessed both the audiences and the financial resources which the film-makers needed; it also had a constitutional commitment to furthering cultural quality which made it a more sympathetic partner for the 'young' directors and developing talents than the producers within the commercial film industry were ever likely to be. In many respects television offered the independent film-makers the perfect marriage of convenience. Yet it was also more like a shotgun wedding, since for one of the partners there was no choice, no possibility of saying 'no'. If television came to be a large part of the solution, it was also identified by many of the film-makers as half of the problem (the other half being the inadequacy of the subsidies available for quality films). If television was the benefactor, it was also the victorious competitor. And, from the point of view of lovers of the cinema film, the crucial question was the degree of magnanimity it would be prepared to show to its vanquished rival. ■

We are obliged to Secker and Warburg Ltd. for permission to publish the above material.

*It goes without saying that the Filmverlag was one of the principal beneficiaries of the Kuratorium's distribution grants, and later of the Ministry's. Indeed, in the first year in which the Ministry scheme operated (1977), four of its six distribution awards went to films in the company which Augstein had rescued earlier that same year.



● AT THE FOUNTAINHEAD (OF GERMAN STRENGTH) directed by Anthea Kennedy and Nick Burton: a multi-layered reconstruction of recent German history, based on the experiences of a Jewish refugee.

WINNING THE POOLS

Nothing, not the earnest solicitation of the Chairman; not the anxious encouragement—'You'll be all right, Jeremy'—of my friends at the BFI; not warnings of the psycho-dramas that beset my predecessor; not memories of distant debates in Labour politics at Oxford; not a brief exposure to semiology at an Edinburgh International Television Festival, nothing prepared me for the culture shock of my first meeting of the British Film Institute Production Board. I had no idea that film could engender such argument. And, coming from the sheltered world of television, I was neither used to such argument nor to engaging in it before deciding whether or not to make a film.

Production has for two years now been designated as a priority growth area for the BFI and, as a result, the BFI Production Board now allocates each year several hundred thousand pounds of public money for film production. Once the Experimental Film Fund, the Board exists to help make films that would otherwise not be made. The sums allocated are puny by the standards of international cinema and by those of a national cinema with any pretensions to adequacy. But every little helps. The question that faced the Board when I took over as Chairman in January 1979, and will face it when I leave, is how it can most usefully and beneficially spend that money, what sort of films should it help towards what screens.

No one could argue that it should make big cinema films. It cannot afford

Jeremy Isaacs,
Chairman of the BFI
Production Board
and recently
appointed Chief
Executive of the
Fourth Television
Channel, writes about
the work of the
Board.

to. No one argues that it should fund, either in drama or in documentary, work that is easily recognised as the usual output of television. (The unusual output of television is another matter.) Some members of the Board, and an extremely stimulating mix I found them, passionately advocate an avant-garde *oeuvre* that is exclusively concerned with film grammar and syntax. Some urge meaningful political interventions at critical junctures in society. Some say simply back this young man's or woman's talent. Some say back this group. Some say dole the money out in penny packets. Others argue for maximum visibility; would-be film-makers who now enjoy beginnings at

school and college need a second boost towards the cinema screen; the Board should back the low-budget feature. A veritable babel of conflicting voice and opinion. How to reconcile? What to do?

In 1978/79 the Production Board, with just over £100,000 to spend, backed seven films. It gave Yvonne Rainer £6,000 to complete *Journeys from Berlin*; Peter Greenaway £10,000 to start *The Falls*; David Clark £16,000 to make Samuel Beckett's *Film*; Jane Jackson £19,000 to make *Angel in the House*; the Quaij Brothers £8,000 to make *Gavotte for Another Time*; Anna Ambrose £30,000 to make *Phoelix*; and Chris Petit £35,000 towards the costs of *Radio On*, co-produced with German money from Wim Wenders' production company, the only film intended for theatre release on this list. This the year before I joined.

For 1979/80, with a vastly increased budget of over £300,000 to spend, some of which went under a new agreement on professional wages and some on improved production values, the Production Board began by setting aside roughly £20,000 to spend on project development. Seventeen grants, ranging from £500 to £1,500, were made to individual film-makers and one communal enterprise to develop ideas towards a completed script. We then gave completion money of £7,000 to Yvonne Rainer for *Journeys from Berlin*; £4,000 to Chris Petit for *Radio On*; and £6,000 to Jonathan Curling and Sue Clayton for *The Song of the Shirt*. Peter Greenaway received a second instalment

of £20,000 for *The Falls*. Marc Karlin got £25,000 to collaborate with BBC Arts Unit at Bristol on a project called *Television and Memory*. The remainder went on six films: £22,000 to Margaret Dickinson to make *The Division*; £15,000 to Vera Neubauer to start her animated film *The Decision*; £42,000 to Joe Comerford—the Irish Arts Council chipping in another £20,000—to make *Travellers*; £52,000 to Heiny Srour to make *Leila and the Wolves* (with French, Belgian and Dutch sources contributing a further £100,000); £64,000 to Nick Burton and Anthea Kennedy to make *At the Fountainhead*; and to Richard Woolley was given £80,000, with another £15,000 to come in the following year, to make *Brothers and Sisters*.

Richard Woolley recently described his feelings on learning of his award as 'Winning the pools'. Anything less like a flutter on Littlewoods would be difficult to imagine. Nearly 200 scripts were submitted that year. Each was read by the BFI's Head of Production, Peter Sainsbury, and either put forward for consideration, in which case it was read by every member of the Board, or rejected by him, in which case his reasons for rejection were circulated to the Board, any member of which could ask to read it too. Members of the Board read the scripts that were circulated to them. There then followed a series of screenings followed by lively discussions which lasted all of long afternoons, and these produced a short list, provoking in its turn even livelier discussions lasting now all of two long days, before the choice was made and patronage exercised. There was no consensus. If there was not blood on the floor of NFT 3 it was only because insults do not draw blood. 'You are an opportunist, and when I use the word "opportunist" I do so in the strictly Leninist sense,' remains my favourite. The Board was comparing like with unlike, with no real agreement as to what it ought to do. This lack of agreement reflected an equivalent disagreement in a wider argument outside about British film: should one shore up the old, or help invent the new?

The members of the Board are appointed by a recommendation of the Chairman to the Governors of the BFI. When I joined, they consisted of film-makers, a writer, a television producer, a trade union official and two teachers of film theory. I added from television a story editor and a film producer. (Also Kevin Brownlow, who was too busy with Thames' documentary series *Hollywood*, hates committees, had served his time on the BFI Board of Governors, and never turned up.) The babel that resulted stemmed from totally different ideas as to which film-makers deserved to be supported. Some argued for formal innovation generally, and to support structuralist projects; some were for political intervention, particularly if the language of film were also extended; others were for what seemed to them to matter, to be practicable, to generate stir and excitement. Some films passionately supported by some members of the Board were blocked by others. Cabals formed,



● **BROTHERS AND SISTERS** directed by Richard Woolley: Carolyn Pickles in a 'subversive' whodunit, cost £100,000, which opens shortly for a London run.

adjourned, reformed. At the end of the day decisions, recrimination and a general wish for a new start.

There was no way the Board could agree on pursuing any one line that could possibly be acceptable to all. We compromised. At the end of the summer, I proposed that we make a practice of setting aside funds for project development rather than disburse all at one go, and that for the next year we divide the money available to us into three packets and spend it on three different types of project. These were very low budget films, probably but not necessarily avant-garde, on which we would spend up to a fifth of the money available to us; middle-sized projects, perhaps documentary or short films, on which we might spend two-fifths; and low budget feature films which could cost up to about £100,000 each, and on which we should be prepared to spend between two- and three-fifths of our cash. If this was agreed, we need no longer choose between strictly non-comparable projects.

Those who preferred to aim high with a low budget feature would nevertheless back experimental minimalism; those who regarded art cinema as death and narrative as dead would nevertheless help support some who wished to make features. The compromise held for the allocation we made in spring 1980. This time, after paying further instalments to

Marc Karlin, Vera Neubauer, Richard Woolley, and giving £10,000 to Kim Longinotto to complete *Cross and Passion*, we gave £25,000 to Malcolm Le Grice for *Finnegan's Chin*, £13,000 to William Raban for *Mirror Play* and £7,500 to Lis Rhodes for *Threads*; in our second category a first instalment of £20,000 to Four Corner Films for *There Are Too Few of Us* and £30,000 to Cinema Action for *Shirley, Figures in a History*. That left, in our third category, enough to back Menelik Shabazz to the tune of £68,000 for *Burning an Illusion*; Sally Potter and her colleagues with the first £70,000 of a total of £100,000 to make *Gold*; £71,000 to Pat Murphy for *Belfast*; and a first instalment of £13,000 to Ed Bennett, with £127,000 to come next year, for *Ascendancy*. That still left us money for project development and to fund three regional workshops.

Several of these projects over the two years are of particular feminist interest; I am thinking of the films by Vera Neubauer, Heiny Srour, Cinema Action, Four Corner Films and Sally Potter. And Richard Woolley's, of course. Several of them concern Ireland, and our relationship with it: *Travellers*, *Cross and Passion*, *Belfast* and *Ascendancy*. *Brothers and Sisters*, *Travellers*, *Leila and the Wolves*, *Belfast*, *Gold*, *Burning an Illusion* and *Ascendancy* are intended for theatrical exhibition. We hope all the



● **EXCHANGE AND DIVIDE** directed by Margaret Dickinson: a diverse examination of the ramifications of divorce in today's middle-class Britain.



● **THE FALLS** directed by Peter Greenaway: the Quaij brothers in a spiralling discourse centred on the biographies of 92 fictional individuals.



● **TRAVELLERS** directed by Joe Comerford: David Spillane, one of the travellers, in an 'intimate and dark' Irish political narrative.

films we have backed will find an audience. But will they? Who sees the films that structuralists make, that regional workshops collaborate in? And where are the British cinemas that have booked *Radio On*?

The BFI Production Board cannot continue without answering the questions that arise about the exhibition of the films it produces. It needs to know whether anyone sees films made in workshops, other than those who made them. The BFI needs too to help construct in London and in the regions a circuit of cinemas that will show its larger films, and then to make films that will draw audiences into those cinemas to view them. And if the films genuinely reach out to new audiences then television should show them also.

The most coherent argument most consistently voiced on the Production Board of recent years is the argument of the Independent Film-makers' Association (IFA), heavily represented among the members of the Board, that we should back them. The argument goes like this; there is a dominant film culture, seen in the conventional cinema and on television. It is in both cases the product of a capitalist industrial system, seeing film as a commodity to be consumed at their leisure by passive audiences seeking only pleasure from it. It is repressive. It is, in

the case both of cinema and of television, both dominant and, contradictorily, dead. What is urgently required for the health of our society, or rather for the possibility of exchanging this society for a healthy one, is an 'oppositional' film culture in which film will use new language to invite an active audience to see what is wrong and to work to put it right.

This oppositional culture was given a powerful boost in Britain by events in Paris in May 1968, and it was to forward it that the IFA defined its independence. Narrative represses. Enjoyment hypnotises. Illusion deceives. Realism renders us passive. Impressionistic criticism trivialises. We need instead a cinema firmly grounded in Marxist aesthetic theory, albeit a Marxism which has moved on from realism to embrace modernism; a cinema which seeks not to involve the spectator in an experience but to distance him from the film; a cinema which invites the spectator not to enjoy himself but to share in constructing the meaning of the film; a cinema which uses the language of representation not to tell a story but to lay out a problematic; a cinema of the workshop, the discussion group, the street, the hustings, the barricades. Godard did it, the young film-maker is told. So can you. There are no other exemplars for you. Hollywood is capitalist; EMI a multi-national aping Hollywood; Rank has given up the ghost;

the Continental art movie was ever an irrelevant hiccup; television a purveyor of homogenised pap.

So runs the argument. And, if it were true, the BFI Production Board might be well advised to stop funding individual film-makers with aspirations to write or direct on television or for the cinema screen, and concentrate instead on supporting film as social practice in the workshop. But the argument is not true. At the National Film School, in BBC TV's *Premiere* series, people go on making movies. *Radio On*, *Rude Boy*, *Breaking Glass*, *Babylon* get made and shown. Bill Douglas is at work again. After *That Sinking Feeling* comes *Gregory's Girl*. After *The Tempest*, what? On television directors of the calibre of Eyre, Frears, Gold, Joffe, Loach, MacKenzie, Millar—to name but a few—make their mark and give us hope, despite all difficulties, of a future for film in Britain.

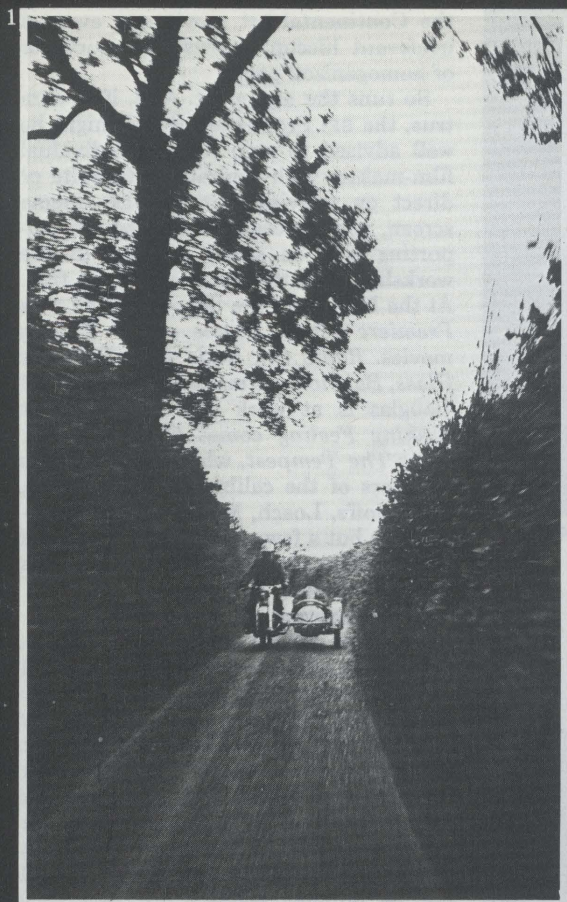
In attempting to resist the single-mindedness of the argument for abandoning the cinema and starting again, I do not mean that Marxist aesthetic theory does not need to be rescued by theorists of Marxism from a commitment only to realism (though that is their problem); nor indeed that that particular debate is not of interest and value; nor that films based on the ideas treated in it should not be made; nor that they should not be publicly funded; nor that they should not be publicly exhibited. I only deny that such films have any particular claim on our attention over and beyond the claims of films and film-makers who offer simpler pleasures or subtler insights deriving from a less self-consciously ideological impetus.

To understand the world, irrespective of whether or not one seeks to change it, it may certainly help to have read Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Lacan, Foucault and, next year, Derrida. But to have read them is not a necessary condition of making a film, nor of any clear help to most film-makers, let alone to beginners.

'I distinguish,' says the proud owner of Thomas Love Peacock's Headlong Hall, 'the picturesque and the beautiful, and I add to them in the laying out of grounds, a third and distinct character, which I call Unexpectedness.' 'Pray, Sir,' said Mr Milestone, 'by what name do you distinguish this character, when a person walks around the grounds for the second time?'

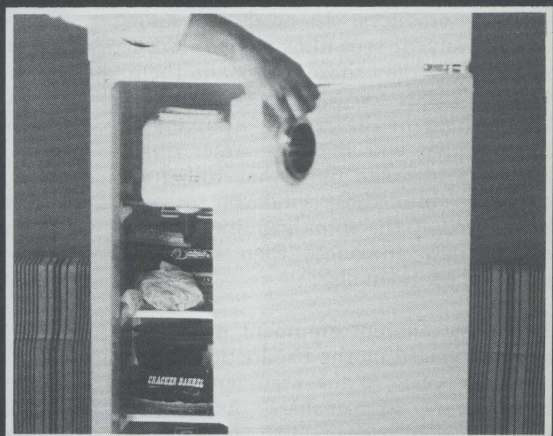
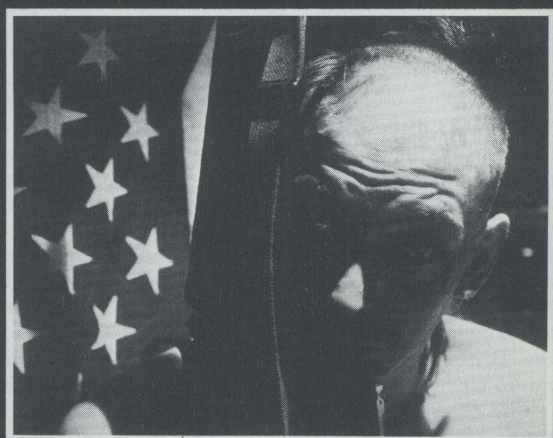
Clive James tells us in his *Unreliable Memoirs* how, if he ran fast enough, he could appear in the school photograph not once or even twice but three times, so long was the exposure. Yet earnest youths today labour to demonstrate that behind the camera positioning us there is a cameraman, behind the cameraman a director, behind the director a money-lender, within the character on the screen an actor. As if we did not now know.

Films, like music, work on us in real time. Grateful for the experience, there is time enough for us to reflect, when the experience is over, on what it meant. I hope the BFI Production Board will continue to encourage experiment in film-making for the greater pleasure of spectators in the cinema, and viewers on television. And I hope they will discourage the purveyors of text. ■



THE BEACONSFIELD BRATS

Martyn Auty



1. 'Following Angels'. 2. Anna Solinis in 'Time In Between'. 3. David Hayman in 'Never Say Die'. 4. 'Shadowplay'. 5. Arthur Ellis in 'The Tumour Principle'. 6. 'Looking in the Fridge for Feelings'.

Film schools in the USA and their counterparts in Britain are separated by more than a few thousand miles—there are also major differences of structure, staffing, funding and facilities—but Britain's National Film School, located on the site of the old Beaconsfield Studios, is raising a generation of film-makers as ciné-literate as the Corman-Coppola protégés who revolutionised Hollywood in the early 1970s.

A selection of the NFS 1980 graduate films* in fact points to two distinct directions: a pursuit of mainstream genre fictions and an impulse towards a new documentary mode. But, whatever the form of their choosing, all the students acknowledge the importance of their viewing experience over the three years' course and underscore the teaching contributions of film-makers as diverse as Sandy Mackendrick, Dusan Makavejev, Jack Gold and Krzysztof Zanussi. It is thoroughly consistent with NFS director Colin Young's 'active curriculum' policy (summarised in his 1974 CILECT paper as a learning-based rather than a teaching-based curriculum) that major practitioners of the cinema should be invited to work with the students, providing advice either on a semi-structured or ad hoc basis as it is required. Zanussi, for example, was at the NFS for a month last year, Mackendrick for six weeks. Their influence is never specific or traceable in the student films. It emerges, rather, in the sense of context that NFS films transmit and to which their makers testify: cinema as an historical/industrial process is a constant coefficient of the work.

The case for a cinematic context is proven most clearly in the work of graduates like Sandy Johnson and Arthur Ellis, whose films *Never Say Die!* and *The Tumour Principle* wear their cinéphilie on their sleeves. Oliver Stapleton's contemporary noir conundrum *Shadowplay* and Paul Bamborough's science-fiction fantasy *The Tom Machine* are less overtly referential but remain consciously indebted to generic models. The two most recognisably British fiction films seen in this selection, *Following Angels* and *Madonna and Child*, also pay their respects to such revered stylists as Scorsese and Bresson.

It is significant, however, that the above list excludes any of the films made at the NFS by women. Previous articles on the National Film School in SIGHT AND SOUND have emphasised the documentary concerns of the women students, and the same impulse is continued in this recent selection. Its importance, I would argue, lies not simply with documentary as a means of raising issues of feminist interest, but also as part of a much wider movement in women's cinema to return to essentials (in film technology and language) and to evolve a specifically feminist mode of discourse in film.

In her prefatory remarks to the ICA's recent film/seminar series 'Women's Own' Claire Johnston stressed the historical conjuncture of feminism and documentary film-making in the early 70s,

*The films discussed here are those selected for screening at the Edinburgh and London Festivals in 1980.

recalling that 'political' cinema in Britain had traditionally been confined to the documentary mode. In the same seminar it was noted how women had chiefly entered film from television, where their training had tended to be in documentary realism, and that, as feminist film-making developed in 70s Britain, documentary had seemed 'an ideal received model' for their work. On a practical level, women film-makers had found it easier to work with lightweight 16 mm cameras, eschewing high-gloss production values in favour of presenting and producing the actuality of women's lives. The reasons why documentary has

'Even if film school did not mean jobs in the film industry, it was a vital formative influence for the film-makers who emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They had not come from Broadway and the theatre, like an older generation, nor had they come from television, like the 50s recruits. They had learned film as film.'

Michael Pye and Lynda Myles in *The Movie Brats* (Faber and Faber, 1979).

'In terms of women's cinema, women have aimed to produce films that both attack the values of the dominant media and construct new forms of pleasure.'

Film-maker Sue Clayton introducing a programme of women's cinema at the ICA.

dominated women's film-making over the last decade are more complex, but the fact of such precedents is an essential consideration for many of the NFS women graduates.

Writing retrospectively on their experiences as film students in SIGHT AND SOUND (Autumn 1977), Jana Bokova and Diane Tammes also acknowledged the formative influence of cinéma-vérité documentaries—as Bokova put it, 'The real story, directly recorded... the magic of captured authenticity.' Tammes also emphasised the necessity for an open critical debate on the documentary work: 'We who have become used to viewing films and viewing them critically in discussion with their makers need and want this to happen in the outside world as well.'

The impetus of Bokova, Tammes and others is continued at the NFS by the women students who currently comprise 30 per cent of the annual intake. Jennie Howarth is an ex-teacher who spent part of her second year at the NFS on attachment to Stephen Frears while he was shooting the TV film *Afternoon Off*; Jenny Wilkes, a former researcher with ATV, worked as associate producer on Thames TV's feature *The One and Only Phyllis Dixey* before enrolling at the NFS.

In the course of *Phyllis Dixey*, a film about the striptease artist, Jenny Wilkes met a dancer called Yvonne Ocampo. The film that Wilkes and Howarth have built around her career story ('*And They Called Me Pussy Dynamite*') uses the documentary mode to describe how Yvonne had childhood dreams of ballet dancing and ended up as a stripper in a Soho revue bar. There are not the usual titillating glimpses of dance routines; rather, Wilkes and Howarth simply allow the interviews to run in long enough takes for the 'dramatic value' to come from their subject—the engaging and witty Yvonne Ocampo. Both co-directors admit that, at several stages of the production, there was a possibility that *Pussy Dynamite* might have become a fiction film; they chose, however, to restrict their material to a documentary format.

The rigidly 'objective' perspective is nowhere more strongly in evidence than in Clare Calder-Marshall's fortuitously titled film *Looking in the Fridge for Feelings*, based around the psychotherapy work of Susie Orbach, author of *Fat is a Feminist Issue*. Orbach's analysis of the deep-seated emotional reasons for over-eating is retested in a (hand-picked) group therapy session, filmed from a fixed position, in which women discuss their obsessions with food and dieting and their unhappiness about their bodies. Gradually, other questions emerge, such as what being 'the cook' means in terms of the woman's power within the family; and ultimately the film achieves a remarkable range of insights and (self-) revelations about how food works to confirm or compensate the position of women within the family and beyond it.

Closer to fiction, but still rooted in the documentary tradition, Lucy Harington's *Time in Between* describes the placement of a teenage girl in a day-care centre for the elderly. Working with a mixture of professional and non-professional actors and in an environment which she had known for some time, Lucy Harington allows the narrative elements—a fleeting and furtive affair between two of the elderly people and a brief friendship between the girl and a boy who works at the centre—to rise to the surface of this neatly understated film, recalling the early 70s style of the Loach/Garnett docu-fictions in its strong sense of social reality and natural humour.

In sharp contrast to the cautious explorations of the potential for feminist film fiction, the espousal of narrative cinema by the men at the NFS appears confident and even cavalier. But this superficial view masks an underlying ambivalence whereby the men find themselves in a more compromised relationship to mainstream genre cinema: reworking, challenging, parodying its conventions, but never breaking faith with it. The approach is arguably more conservative, but such is the nature of the 'entertainment' industry directors like Johnson and Ellis have set their sights on. After all, as Pye and Myles have demonstrated,

a major characteristic of the Movie Brats' style was the allusion to established, even hallowed regimes of pleasure in the cinema—Warner Bros. cartoons, RKO film noir, for example—rather than a departure into the uncharted waters of new narrative.

So it is with flamboyant relish and a confident anticipation of audience enjoyment that Sandy Johnson has fashioned his delirious film noir parody *Never Say Die!* around the story of a young man who believes he is about to die and becomes embroiled with a gangster and his moll in 1940s Glasgow. Boasting a Bernard Herrmann score (selections from *The Devil and Daniel Webster* and *Obsession*), a tongue-in-cheek recreation of Hollywood titles and some exquisite black and white photography by Richard Greatrex, this film delivers the kind of filmic pleasure only the churlish would question. For all its Hollywood gloss, however, *Never Say Die!* testifies to Johnson's fondness for Ealing product and to an admiration for fellow-Scot Alexander Mackendrick. In the last analysis it is the stylistic panache of the film, 'calculated to turn the heads of the high technicians' as Johnson puts it, that has already brought his name to the attention of major league producers.

That the same may be said of Arthur Ellis should not disguise the fact that his 'calling card', *The Tumour Principle*, is a slicker but slighter work, turning on a savage parody of the whole cinema-going process from screen-ads through voice-overs to trailers. In fact *The Tumour Principle* is largely a trailer for a putative film of that name, but Ellis surrounds his embryonic narrative (certified insane Vietnam veteran goes homicidal in New York) with a 'full supporting programme'—the tail end of a first feature (*Coronation Street—The Movie*), an on-screen intermission to the accompaniment of some sub-Leone mood music. This is the obverse of the film-in-a-void student work; here the social and industrial context of film is everything, and though this film may sell Ellis short, it proves he knows his market-place. If *The Tumour Principle* operates entirely within quotation marks—snappy scenes with the familiar voice-over harangue—that is after all the rhetoric of show business hype. Ellis remembers a time when he used to go to work half an hour early especially to watch a James Bond video trailer in a shop window several times over. He owns up to the charge that *The Tumour Principle* is a cheap way out of dealing with narrative problems, but claims it has taught him much about 'hard sell' and how to make the audience sit up and take notice.

The need to investigate and interrogate the medium one works in is a crucial factor for Oliver Stapleton, a former stills photographer whose *Shadowplay*, also shot in black and white by Richard Greatrex, deals with the interaction of film and still photography. Revolving around the attempts to stage an Athol Fugard play by a group of expatriate South Africans living in London, *Shadowplay* employs a fragmented narrative that calls into question the 'truth'

of images from the past (in South Africa) and the present (in London).

Stapleton's film is tougher on its audience than any other in this selection, but it still shrewdly balances the elements of photographic investigation and movie thriller, chasing and only occasionally losing sight of its own tail. *Shadowplay*'s dislocation of time, place and narrative is a deliberate move on the part of Stapleton to pose himself problems; he deliberately sought to give himself freedom in the editing, especially since his professional transition from single images (photography) to successions of images (cinematography) provides the motivation and rationale for the film. As to the role of the film school, Stapleton regards the demystification of film technology as its most important contribution: 'the knowledge,' as he puts it, 'that no one in the industry will ever put one over on you.'

Film turned questioningly upon itself is the neat twist in Paul Bamber's science-fiction comedy *The Tom Machine*, inspired by rather than adapted from the novels of Philip K. Dick. More expensive than the other films, though economical by s-f movie standards, the film takes its title from a domestic robot (voice dubbed by John Cleese) that apparently regulates the humdrum life of its 'master' Tom until he begins to question his job and his existence, whereupon it is revealed that Tom has himself been the unwitting subject of a movie designed to entertain but confine him while he pilots a redundant spacecraft. It is a clever conceit that admits of a wry sense of humour, despite the setting of a dehumanised futureworld that might otherwise resemble that of *THX 1138*.

If *The Tom Machine* recalls the early (film school) version of George Lucas' first feature, Terence Davies' intensely wrought *Madonna and Child* brings to mind the Catholic angst of the early Scorsese work. Religion and sexuality provide the tensions which are shown to be inwardly crucifying the film's protagonist, a repressed homosexual who lives with his elderly mother and works in the unfriendly environment of a local government office. His sense of guilt over his night-time excursions and pick-ups is compounded by a conviction that Catholic motifs such as the Madonna and Child betoken 'correct' sexuality against which his own will inevitably be judged as perverse, sacrilegious. Though somewhat lugubrious and unrelieved in tone, the film has an admirable, at times Bressonian austerity in its spare black and white imagery.

With Jonathan Roberts' beautifully understated road movie *Following Angels*, the allusions to Hollywood Movie Brats' style proliferate but are assimilated into the texture of the film. They are present in the sharp close-ups of motorbike and sidecar that recall the hyper-realist shots of the yellow cab in *Taxi Driver* and in the 'spiritual revelations' made to the dying woman Mary that resemble in *mise en scène* the early 'light show' appearances of the aliens in *Close Encounters*. After the opening

introduction of the vehicle (a retirement present for George, an ex-trade unionist), the film moves into an exploration of England that is by turns familiar and original; but within the linear narrative (George and Mary visit old haunts and she dies suddenly in a rural hospital) runs a second thread that intimates Mary's precognition of her imminent death. Roberts renders this 'supernatural' element in terms of a stylisation of lighting and soundtrack which appears to spring naturally from the heightened realism elsewhere.

Being a movie brat in Britain is, of course, no guarantee of success in cinema. Some of the NFS graduates may move into conventional television; others may move abroad where feature-film industries are healthier. When Mike Radford wrote rather despairingly in *SIGHT AND SOUND* (Autumn 1977) of the prospects that faced him and his fellow-NFS graduates he cited the examples of Hollywood and France: 'In America, the industry itself is big enough to absorb this kind of work. What price Scorsese, Lucas, Coppola, Malick, Spielberg? Why are there 32 films by new directors every year in France?' The question was only partly answered by the pragmatism of Steve Morrison ('There was no feature film industry for me to go to so I would have to think in terms of television') and the commercially-minded optimism of Chris King ('We shouldn't feel that working in the commercial industry is like soiling our hands').

Matters seem to have changed over recent years, and the imminence of the fourth television channel, which 'will include in its schedules the largest practicable proportion of programmes made by British independent producers', may be a major factor behind the shift to a more optimistic outlook, though few NFS graduates harbour any illusions about the struggles they will encounter. Sandy Johnson feels, however, that there is now a keener awareness at the School of how it should approach the cinema business: 'The industry likes to see itself being toyed with in terms it can relate to'—familiar genres and films that display an awareness of cinema as a social, industrial and historical practice. The recent success of several British feature productions (*Quadrophenia*, *Scum*, *The Tempest*, for example) may explain why some of the majors—Paramount, ITC, EMI—are contemplating or already producing their own series of cinema shorts with strong narrative lines and an emphasis on action sequences in order to encourage young directors. Arthur Ellis is making one such film for Paramount, and speaks of the challenge he faces to ensure that the adrenalin flows constantly within a half-hour homicide story and to make the obligatory plot twist work on the audience every time. It's almost a metaphor for the crucial years immediately after film school—adrenalin flow, hard sell, the need to command attention amid the commercials and the major Hollywood features—and the pay-off is the most vital feature of all. The brats need more than pocket money. ■

AN EDINBURGH WOMAN

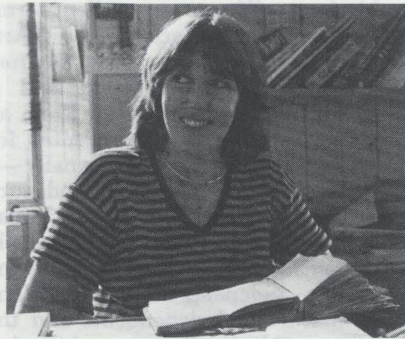
Last autumn, after thirteen years at the Edinburgh Film Festival, eight of them as director, Lynda Myles left Scotland to become curator of the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, California. In 1980, the operating cost of the Edinburgh Film Festival was £70,000, minuscule by international standards, and the projected box-office income £25,000. To bridge the difference, the festival, which has become one of the most respected in the world, received grants of £10,000 from the British Film Institute and £35,000 from the Scottish Film Council and the Lothian Region and Edinburgh District local authorities. The latter sum is part of an annual allocation to Filmhouse, Edinburgh's year-round theatre and festival base. When Lynda Myles joined the festival its budget was £2,500. Jim Hickey, the festival's new director, observed shortly before this interview that the Scottish grant bodies take the attitude that the festival runs on a mixture of luck and judgment, but expect to see a fair proportion of the latter.

WHEN YOU LEFT Edinburgh last September, several people remarked on what a long way the film festival had come during your eight years as director. What do you feel they meant?

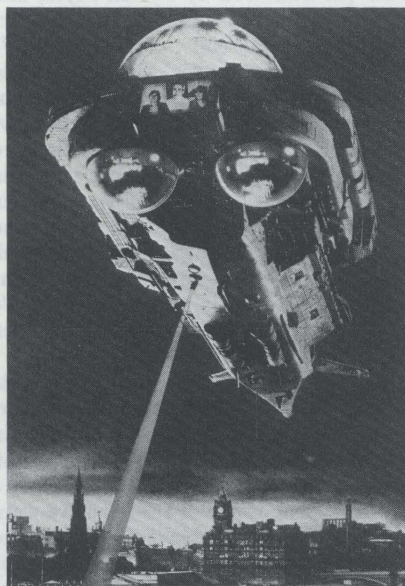
LYNDA MYLES: When I first was aware of the festival in the mid-60s it was completely rudderless, directionless. The organisers were basically showing an amorphous collection of rather third-rate movies. When I went to the festival in '67—a festival I attacked in the local press—I can remember, for example, going to a feature which was preceded by four interminable documentaries, one of which was on safari parks in Kenya. There was no specific policy about what they would take. They would take films chosen by national committees: the Indians or the Poles would simply send the films of their choice, not the festival's choice. No festival operating like that could have any clear identity. There was no overview about what it stood for.

It had been very exciting in the early years. When it was started in 1947 it had a very specific commitment and a very clear vision, but this had become gradually eroded over the years. But then again when Edinburgh started there were only three film festivals in the world—Cannes, Venice and Edinburgh. By the late 50s or early 60s film festivals were multiplying at an alarming rate, and most had much larger budgets than Edinburgh, so Edinburgh couldn't keep up. They never had a full-time director. I was their first full-time director—from 1973.

I was twenty when I became involved, and I suppose at that point there was a certain arrogance of youth. David Will and I had both been very influenced by *Cahiers du Cinéma*. We both felt opposed to the British film establishment, and we were very pro-Hollywood,



Simon Perry interviews Lynda Myles



The 1980 festival poster. Photograph of Lynda Myles by John Reiach.

which was a strange position at that time. Our plans for the festival were always very specific.

Did you cobble plans together as you went—what with money being short—or can you claim to have set long-term objectives and seen them through?

In the early years, the late 60s, we took an auteurist position, pushing directors like Sam Fuller and Douglas Sirk, whose work had never been recognised in Britain until then. And from '69, when we did the Sam Fuller retrospective, we developed the interest in publishing, and the feeling that we wanted to expand beyond the traditional boundaries of a film festival. We published a book of essays on Fuller to accompany the retrospective, and the idea of publishing has continued until now. If we have not done

it quite every year, that's simply because of economic problems. But it has always been a central aim of the festival.

The other area of expansion was the conferences, which began in a formal sense in '72 with the first conference held in Europe on *Women in Film*. Rather than just screening movies, we wanted some kind of contextualisation. And we wanted to have more structural discussion with audiences, through seminars and so on.

Edinburgh tends to be seen as having taken certain stands in the theoretical field. Did you actively nurture these?

The theoretical positions we held obviously changed and evolved over the years. At no point was it a question of what I or one or two of us wanted to do. We did work with a group of people—Paul Willemsen, Peter Wollen, Laura Mulvey, John Halliday, Bill and Claire Johnston, Phil Hardy. There was a group involved in endless debate about where Edinburgh should go and what the new argument should be. That went from Brecht, to psychoanalysis, to the conference on *History, Production, Memory*. We did always want Edinburgh to provide a base for the best new theoretical work.

Another central idea was to provide a showcase for areas of cinema that were otherwise neglected. Since we became involved, Edinburgh never exhibited much appetite for run-of-the-mill European 'art cinema'. It was always the areas that needed greater championing that interested us: areas like the avant-garde, political cinema, Third World cinema, the independents, and 'lost' Hollywood films—both recent movies and neglected older ones. Also new areas of emerging cinema; we were, for example, showing the new Germans back in the late 60s, although it was not until '74 that these films were bought for distribution over here. Recently, we looked at areas like Filipino cinema, trying to introduce them to a wider audience.

How does a festival showing help a 'difficult' film to reach that wider audience? Do you really believe Edinburgh can do it?

The festival can be most useful in drawing the attention of critics to films that may otherwise be overlooked in the normal pattern of distribution. An example is *Heart Beat*, which was screened at the 1980 festival. When we first discussed showing that film, it was by no means one whose success was guaranteed. It had had a very rough ride in America, and although it went on later to a great run at Gate Two cinema in London, at the time of the Edinburgh screening it was part of what you might call the 'Edinburgh Easy Rider syndrome'—that is, Edinburgh was used as a showcase for a film which was flummoxing its distributor, Warners in this instance.

My feeling is that there are areas in which Edinburgh can achieve something concrete, and unless it focuses on these areas, it's just feeding the ego of the festival director. I cannot see the point in showing films that are guaranteed a release and a reasonable audience already, at least not as a general rule. It's the independents and the mavericks that we can do most to help.

Don't you feel that the independents' access to the market, particularly the UK market, has become seriously diminished? The cost of launching a film is now so prohibitive that only a very few are given a chance to prove themselves with audiences. Hasn't that had a fragmenting effect on independent cinema?

I'm inclined to think that independent cinema as we knew it in the late 60s no longer exists. All the same, the success of a film like Godard's *Sauve qui peut* (*La Vie*) in the States seems to indicate that you can make a radical film which can be widely seen. Many areas Edinburgh concerned itself with have become more popular. Areas like exploitation cinema, and low-budget work, became more accepted. The National Film Theatre programme has altered somewhat as a result of some of the Edinburgh ideas. And we did play some role in developing a base for theoretical work—that aim was achieved. There are far more weekends on specific topics now than I certainly can remember ten years ago. It's very difficult to define exactly Edinburgh's contribution to this, but whatever we did had a kind of ripple effect. We always tried to provide a base for women film-makers, for example.

I think one of the most evident aspects of the festival in recent years has been the high turnout of film-makers from all over the world.

Another basic intention was to promote the exchange of ideas between film-makers and critics, and as much as possible between film-makers and the audience. If one is trying to identify the success of Edinburgh over the last twelve years, I think it has operated quite well as a rendezvous for film-makers. At the 1980 festival there were over 50—introducing their movies, doing press interviews, or just chatting.

One thing I especially like is that people sometimes refer to 'an Edinburgh film'. I think there's a certain kind of film—films which belong to the cinema of ideas—which people feel will get a more sympathetic hearing at Edinburgh than anywhere else.

You mentioned the *Easy Rider* syndrome. What happened with that film? Was it a mesh-point between the festival and the industry?

Edinburgh's whole relationship with the industry goes back to '69 and *Easy Rider*. Columbia-Warner agreed to give us the film at a point when it was a film nobody wanted to pick up. They flew in Peter Fonda, and it was an extraordinary success at the festival. Later it opened in London and ran for a year without a break. That was a major turning point: I think the industry realised we could serve

some function. We were catering for a much younger audience than perhaps the Wardour Street people were geared towards, or could predict. They saw that Edinburgh was a good testing ground. It happened again with United Artists and *Annie Hall* a few years ago.

The relationship is an interesting, symbiotic one. We are on excellent terms with Columbia-EMI-Warner, United Artists and Fox: they depend on us from time to time, and we would find it difficult to exist without them. From an economic point of view it's essential for the festival to show hits occasionally—it would be crazy to be purist and turn down some superb major film. I also think the festival would be culturally impoverished if it were showing exclusively independent cinema. The weird mixture of independents and the industry at Edinburgh is something few festivals have on the same scale. Mainly I like the idea of the majors using Edinburgh to show rather more problematic movies. That, too, works both ways. It can help a movie, and it can help a distributor make up his mind whether to risk the huge cost of release.

Our track record with most of the American directors profiled in *The Movie Brats* [co-authored by Lynda Myles and Michael Pye] also acts as a reassurance to the commercial companies. We screened George Lucas' student movies back in the late 60s. Brian De Palma was virtually unknown over here when we had his retrospective in '76. Francis Ford Coppola's *The Rain People* was shown in the '74 festival—it eventually opened in London ten years after it was made. And we championed Martin Scorsese well before he was a superstar name. He came to Edinburgh for his retrospective in '75 just after shooting *Taxi Driver*, and then we premiered that film the next year.

In our early years it was very hard to get films, either from major distributors or from independents. Confidence in Edinburgh had sunk to a zero point. Things have changed a lot. We do get a very high proportion of the films we want now. Producers like Roger Corman, and mini-majors like Lorimar, have become especially helpful. It's a significant shift.

What were the disappointments? Did you leave with any notable regrets?

I had hoped Edinburgh would be the main base in Britain for British independent cinema, and in '79 we had very high hopes for a major renaissance of the British film. But it seemed to be so badly hit by the recession that the 1980 festival didn't reflect any real increase in indigenous production. So many of the successful directors have already been swallowed up by Hollywood.

As regards critical work, I think that's in a kind of limbo at the moment. It's not clear where that's headed. But I certainly have no regrets about any of the work Edinburgh did. It was very important at the time.

Edinburgh should have, and does have, a very specific commitment to showing both Scottish and British films. But there's a difficult problem one encounters with poor or mediocre work: do we show it or not? One solution might be to have

an information section in which we would simply show all the new British movies, regardless of quality. But a problem then arises with directors who find their films are in the information section, not in the main festival: they may feel a ghetto has been created and they're being herded into it. Furthermore, if you abolish all critical standards when it comes to British or Scottish films, a showing on that basis is not going to help a film-maker much either. So perhaps the only way to carry on is the way we have—to select the British films that we thought were important to show, judging them by the same criteria as other films. One of the best pieces of advice I received when I became director was from Richard Roud [currently director of the New York festival] who said: 'Never devalue the currency.' He meant that you can't begin to introduce other aesthetic factors; you can't show a film simply because it's Scottish, or you devalue the credibility of the whole event.

What of the future? There are now about 400 film festivals each year around the world. In what ways do you believe Edinburgh can strengthen its credibility still further and justify its place in the calendar?

It needs to have a more specific focus. I felt the 1980 festival was not concentrated enough, though we showed quite a few good films. I think the festival worked best in a year like 1975, the year of the Brecht conference, when the fact that Brecht and his relationship to cinema—the effect of his ideas on cinema—were being discussed throughout the entire event added a certain dimension to the way one approached all the films being shown that year. For the festival to be meaningful it should go back to having one major event every year—one major conference—and something Edinburgh can do which, say, SEFT weekends can't do is to bring in international speakers. That way, it achieves both coherence and perspective.

There are very few festivals that exist as a forum for exchanging ideas. Edinburgh is a forum where film-makers can come and talk about their work. That's crucial. If they're only interested in a market place, Edinburgh is not for them. We always wanted to make some kind of ideological intervention in what was happening in British film culture and the international film culture. That remained the main thrust of our efforts, even though we fought some tough internal political battles to maintain it. I must acknowledge an enormous debt of gratitude to Colin Young for his support over the years—it made for survival.

At the same time, I don't want to imply that I wasn't interested in whether a film was bought or not after Edinburgh. Part of the point of my preference for films that don't already have distributors is that I hope they will be picked up. One of my major regrets over thirteen years is that, if one is showing almost 200 movies, after each festival a lot of them get shipped home and never reappear. The peculiar mixture of semiotics and selling can be strange and fascinating, and can lead to strange encounters. ■

'IF I WERE ASKED TO define my cinema,' Thodoros Angelopoulos has said—not an easy task for anyone when one lays the four hours of his latest film, *O Megalexandros*, against the four hours of *The Travelling Players* and three other transitional films in the past ten years—I would call it a cinema of dead spaces sandwiched between times in which things take place.' A deceptively simple account from a director who, with the award of the 1980 Venice Gold Lion for *O Megalexandros*, has consolidated a critical reputation established by *The Travelling Players* to be considered as one of the foremost European innovators of a film language of epically Marxist dimensions.

Angelopoulos, who was born in Athens, studied jurisprudence before leaving for the Sorbonne in 1960. He soon transferred to the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques, but was expelled a year later after disputes with his lecturers. After a project for a short 16mm thriller fell through, he returned to Athens and became a film critic for the left wing paper *Dimokratiki Allagi* until it was closed down by the Colonels in 1967. In 1965 he had begun a 'musical thriller', *Formix Story*, featuring a pop group. Conflicts with the producer, however, delayed his directorial début until 1968, when he completed a black and

white short, *I Ekpombi* (*The Transmission*), a kind of candid camera documentary with street interviews about a media competition. The film won a prize at the Thessaloniki Festival, as did his first full length feature, *Anaparastasi* (*Reconstruction of a Crime*, 1970). The latter also drew attention to the camerawork of Giorgios Arvanitis, who was to be Angelopoulos' collaborator on a further four films.

Anaparastasi was shot in black and white in twenty-seven days in Thalia, a village near Ioanina in Epirus, with a crew of five, a cast chosen from the locality, and a budget of £6,000, much of which came from a state grant arising from an obscure Greek law. It could be seen as one of Greece's first independent films. Based on an actual event, the murder of a Greek worker living in Germany by his barmaid wife Eleni and her lover, Christos, who falsify evidence of the husband's return to Germany but are suspected by a sister-in-law and eventually accuse each other of the crime, the plot bears a passing resemblance to the myth of the House of Atreus, which is used more extensively in the *The Travelling Players*. Here it provides only a point of cultural contrast, highlighting the poverty and desperation of the all but deserted village. From the opening shot, of the husband returning in a battered lorry which gets stuck in the mud

and has to be freed by stones, the film establishes a physical focus on continual rain on stone which reflects the hardship of the village.

The reconstruction is that of the examining magistrate, whose inquiries are interspersed with sequences of the crime—although, characteristically, we are never shown the actual murder—and with a social documentary which a TV troupe (including the director himself) are making about the crime and the village. In this way a detached, non-sequential mosaic is constructed: the desperate principals are shown against the matriarchal background of the village, which is revealed as the real motivating cause of their crime. As the magistrate discovers, their affair was tolerated by the husband, yet the wife suggests cutting his body into pieces to hide it in a fox's earth, and is later seen calmly planting leeks over his fresh grave. The desolation of the village is contrasted with the comparative elegance and bourgeois luxury of Ioanina, where the couple furtively and feverishly make love in a hotel room while establishing their alibi. When their crime is revealed, Eleni is almost lynched by the old women of the village, who act as a kind of chorus, shown in a 360 degree tracking shot outside their stone houses on the cliff-side; and the film closes as it began, cutting back to the husband's return to

Tony Mitchell discusses the modern epic cinema of Thodoros Angelopoulos, maker of 'O Megalexandros'

ANIMATING DEAD SPACE AND DEAD TIME



'O Megalexandros': the group of English tourists with the bandits who take them as hostages.

indicate an order which has been ruptured. With its poverty of means, this remarkable first feature presents alternately sharp and gloomy sequences of deprivation, while introducing what was to become a characteristic stylistic use of pauses and tracking shots.

The following year Angelopoulos persuaded Giorgos Papalios, the son of an armaments manufacturer, to produce *Meres Tu '36* (*Days of '36*), his first explicitly political film. In it his anti-dramatic, Brechtian idiosyncrasies of style—off-camera action, 'dead space', 'dead time', slow, panoramic tracking shots and long, wordless corridor sequences—are further developed, partly as a consequence of the threat of censorship from the Colonels. 'The dictatorship,' Angelopoulos has commented, 'is embodied in the formal structure of the film. Imposed silence was one of the conditions under which we worked. The film is about what is unspoken. If I had tried to express myself more clearly, I would have been censored, so I made the film in such a way that the spectator realises that censorship is involved.' In inviting the spectator to a detached assessment of events by way of lengthy,

often static incidental details in 'dead time', such as footsteps, gestures, whispers, silent reactions amid the general bungling of a group of government ministers, the film risks tedium in confronting the frequently absurd predicament of political power under an autocratic but ineffectual régime.

Before the dictatorship of General Metaxas in 1936, a trade unionist is assassinated at a workers' rally (a long, pre-credit sequence, as in *Anaparastasi*) and a former police informer, Sofianos, is arrested and charged with the murder. The suspect takes a Conservative MP hostage in his cell and demands to be released, creating a delicate predicament for the government, who will lose the support of the Conservatives if they don't free the hostage, and the support of the democrats if they do. After a botched attempt to poison the prisoner, a marksman is called in to dispose of him, and order is re-established. The George Grosz-like caricature of the often grotesque government officials lends a farcical edge to the situation, as in the diplomatic reception for the British military officials and their wives, which takes place on a stony beach in blazing

heat with warm champagne. Generally enclosed in the corridors of power to the point of claustrophobia (despite the fact that we never see inside the prison cell), the film also breaks out into long, panoramic tracking shots for rare incidents of group action, and the contrast is startling.

Three sequences in *Days of '36* emphasise Angelopoulos' use of a Brechtian, episodic form in which single complete scenes accumulate significance separately from the narrative context they are a part of—like knots in a piece of string. In one, an escape attempt by the prisoners, the camera pans round the exercise yard as they pass on a message, in a dance-like sequence recalling Jancsó's *Confrontation*. Then the guards move in and the prisoners overpower them, while three manage to escape over the wall, only to be recaptured almost immediately by guards on horseback (echoing Jancsó's *The Red and the White*). Back in the yard, the prisoners are placed against the wall while the three escapees are made to run up and down the yard with hands on heads. We then cut to the entrance hall, as the prisoners peel off from a long line and go

Left to right: 'The Reconstruction'; 'Days of '36'; meeting of the actors and the British army in 'The Travelling Players'; the accusing corpse in 'The Huntsmen'; 'O Megalexandros'.

Below: Angelopoulos at work on the scene from 'O Megalexandros' illustrated on the previous page.



'O Megalexandros': Tony Mitchell interviews Angelopoulos

You've described classical Greek antiquity as a millstone the Greek people are forced to bear. Is O Megalexandros an attempt to draw on a more popular, political mythology?

THODOROS ANGELOPOULOS: Greek people have grown up caressing dead stones. I've tried to bring mythology down from the heights and directly to the people, in both *The Travelling Players* and *O Megalexandros*. The title is not 'Alexander the Great', but 'Megalexandros', who exists in popular, anonymous legends and fables, and has nothing to do with the historical Alexander—he evokes a totally different personage. For this

reason we have had difficulty finding a translation for the title. The legend of Megalexandros originated in 1453 under Turkish domination, and it has come down through oral tradition over the centuries. It embodies one of the deepest of Greek sentiments, that of waiting for a liberator, even a Messiah—he's a kind of Christ figure, and in the film is also identified with St George.

The film is based on two sources. One is 'The Book of Megalexandros', which is an account of the legend, and provides the general climate of the film rather than the storyline. The second, more concrete source is an actual event in 1870, when a group of aristocratic English tourists were kidnapped by Greek bandits at Marathon. The bandits held them to ransom and demanded an amnesty from the government in exchange for the hostages. The government botched the whole business, and the exchange never came about; so the tourists were killed and a scandal erupted. The British fleet blockaded the port.

up two opposite staircases to their cells, and one of the men who escaped is finally brought in. The sequence is virtually uninterrupted in its sweep, though there are obvious time cuts. It illustrates how Angelopoulos' *plans séquences* can move through time as well as space, besides being a representation in microcosm of the central idea of the film—the re-establishment of order.

A more comic use of *plan séquence* follows Sofianos' request for music. A wind-up gramophone is carried into the yard, and the music proceeds until other prisoners begin banging their plates against the bars. A number of guards come into the yard and fire into the air; the noise stops, the music stops, and the gramophone is carried out of the yard. Here the tracking is less arabesque than precise, reflective and detached. The announcement of the 'kidnap' to one of the government ministers finds him ceremonially opening the foundations of a new Olympic stadium on a bumpy, arid piece of wasteland, around which he does a victory lap in a jeep. It is this sense of farcical discomfiture, made manifest by the sense of oppressive heat emphasised by the film's sharpened lighting, which

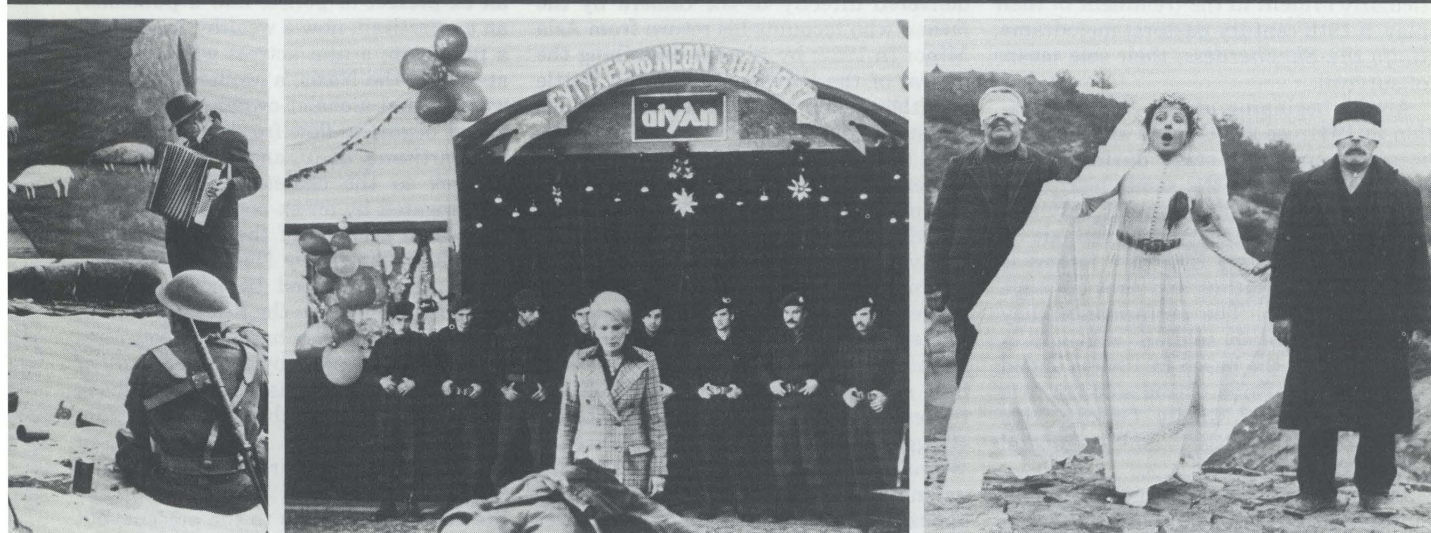
animates the emotionless, often geometrical formalism. With the exception of the episodes mentioned above, and the final sequence in which three subversives are executed as a demonstration of the re-establishment of order, it needs continual reminders of the political situation the film reflects for one to fill in its disarming sense of emptiness.

If *Days of '36* leaves the impression of a sparse, minimal and monochromatic palette, *O Thissos* (*The Travelling Players*, 1975), with its complex and crowded historical scope, is a far richer film in its explicitness. Like its predecessor, it deals in strong political terms with a period of history considered taboo by the Colonels, whose fall interrupted shooting for five months in 1974, and it was virtually smuggled into Cannes the following year since it also aroused Karamanlis' disapproval. In it Angelopoulos displays a persuasive mastery of his involved and idiosyncratic filming techniques, together with a sometimes bewildering dislocated montage.

The film is a study from a revolutionary standpoint of the turbulent period of Greek history between the fall of

Metaxas in 1939 and the election of Papagos in 1952, as experienced by a travelling company of actors whose relationship is based on the family of the House of Atreus. But Angelopoulos is adamant that the Electra story is not intended as a superimposition grafted on to the historical events in any academic sense. The film as he sees it is a 'reckoning with Greek culture—an attempt to surpass the mythological area of tragedy by bringing it into modern life and modern history, thus destroying its mythological aspect.'

As in *O Megalexandros*, Angelopoulos is concerned with popularising myth and divesting it of its Olympian grandeur. Orestes is the only character actually named in *The Travelling Players*, and he is seen, together with the Pylades figure, primarily as a representation of the 1939 partisan maquis, the National Liberation Front, and the capture and exile it experienced. The mythological aspect serves more to anchor the diffuse historical roots of the film, and give continuity to its complex deployment of space and time. So the Aegisthus character who kills the company's leading man, a survivor of former struggles in Asia Minor



This is your third film in which British characters appear, albeit in relatively minor roles. In Days of '36 and The Travelling Players they appear as caricatures to English eyes. Do you see them as paternalistic colonial oppressors? One critic even used the word 'xenophobic' about O Megalexandros...

When I use English characters, they are not so much representatives of Britain as of all foreigners, from the point of view of the Greek people, or the common consciousness, which has regarded the British as a governing force operating from outside. After all, up to 1947 Greece was dominated by the British in the role of protectors. Stylistically, they are caricatures, and forceful ones, of the foreign coloniser, the exporter of capital from Greece. But if you caricature someone, it does also imply a certain affection, a sympathetic acceptance. The tourists in *O Megalexandros* are innocents, especially Lord Lancaster, who was related to Queen Victoria. He's an innocent, Byronic type, in love with Greece;

but he is outside the responsibilities of power and has no real weight politically.

The long and drawn out process of editing the film would seem to suggest it is on a similarly epic scale to The Travelling Players. Is it as complex in its dislocation of time and cross-references?

The first thing to be said is that it's the most simple film I've made so far. Its progress is linear, and it hasn't developed its stylistic form in the course of editing like the other films. There are no chronological jumps—the film begins on New Year's Eve in 1900 and proceeds from there, except for the final sequence when the little Alexander becomes Megalexandros and goes towards the city. Which is a modern city—present-day Athens, in fact—in contrast to the rural, turn-of-the-century world of the rest of the film. When the little Alexander enters the city, he brings all the experience of the century with him. He has gained a total experience of life, sex and death, and he comes into the city at sunset, and over it

there is a great question mark. How long will the night last, and when will a new day break?

Does this mean the film is more realistic than The Travelling Players?

On the contrary—it's more surrealistic. It doesn't describe real events, but their sense and meaning, and concentrates on political and sexual consequences. It's a more 'poetic' film, whereas *Travelling Players* was more concrete.

Eva Kotamanidou's role seems very complicated—she is Alexander's sister, daughter and mistress...

Her role is a result of the structure of the 'Book of Megalexandros', which intertwines a number of myths, such as Oedipus, but under different names. In the popular legend, which the film follows, Alexander's birth is a mystery; he is a 'child of fortune', so he adopts a woman from the town as his mother, and her daughter becomes his sister. Later he marries his adopted mother, so his step-

in 1922, is a paradigm of the Fascist movement of 4 August 1936, and his attempt to collaborate with the Nazis is seen in one of the memorable fixed-camera sequences which illustrate Angelopoulos' treatment of the surge of historical events. The theatre troupe is captured by Nazis and about to be shot after Aegisthus has offered himself to the Germans as a 'comrade' and been brutally rejected, when a partisan raid off-camera interrupts the execution and the players make their escape.

The narrative is always subject to interruptions, which serve to enmesh the incidental players in the fabric of the events they unwittingly live through. The characters take various political positions (Electra's sister marries an American officer, while her mother collaborates in her adultery with Aegisthus; and Electra herself, in Eva Kotamanidou's striking performance, is shown constantly trying to come to terms with the traumas around her, seeing Orestes as the sole fixed point), but they are not treated in psychological terms. Rather, they are contrasting victims of the historical and political context which buffets them about and transforms them. The use of interruption by political events is particularly evident in the treatment of their play, a 19th century pastoral melodrama, *Golfo the Shepherdess*, their sole means of survival.

At the beginning of the Nazi occupation in 1941, we see Orestes and Pylades pursued across the stage during a performance, while in the same year, after hostilities have begun between Italy and Greece, a performance is drowned out by an air raid. Later, Electra's father is betrayed by Aegisthus and shot on stage by collaborators. The performance they give to the British soldiers who apprehend them on the beach in 1945 is ended by the death of one of the soldiers in a rebel attack; and finally Orestes kills Aegisthus on stage amid general applause.

The players provide a foreground continuity to the scrambled historical

context; often in a literal sense, as in the memorable sequence (again with a stationary camera) in which the ebb and flow of the 1944 Battle of Athens between Monarchist and Allied forces and the Communist partisans alternates up and down a city street as the actors cautiously flee across the foreground. The film's formal dynamic sets up an interplay between the eruption of events into a stationary frame and panoramic tracks through space and time, illustrating the director's notion of movement within stasis. In the course of one only briefly interrupted *plan séquence*, six years elapse: on New Year's Eve in 1946 Fascists and Communists vie for the ballroom stage to sing their political songs (which include a hilarious anti-Skobby version of 'In the Mood'), observed by Electra who has come to see the troupe's accordionist. The camera follows the Fascists, who erupt into the streets singing, heading towards an election rally which we realise is for Papagos in 1952; such ellipses alternate with lengthy sequences of linear chronology.

A more overtly theatrical device, repeated in the use of a narrator in *O Megalexandros*, is the breaking up of the film into three parts by monologues delivered directly to the camera by the father, who recounts his return from Asia Minor in 1922; by Electra describing the arrival of the British prior to the Battle of Athens; and by Pylades relating his arrest and exile to the island of Makronissos in 1947. Within this framework, the players, the play and the historical events are meshed in what Angelopoulos has called a 'homogeneous aesthetic flux'. Unity and disparity of time and place alternate according to the camera technique within the edited sequence, avoiding emotional imagery and ordering a seemingly intractable sweep of material into multiple reverberations of political repression and the doomed revolutionary struggles arising from it. Like *Finnegans Wake*, *The Travelling Players* is circular; its end is its beginning and vice versa. It opens with the accordionist's voice over

a 'family portrait' shot of the players: 'Autumn 1952. Aegion. We were tired. We hadn't slept for two days.' It ends with the same sequence, a return to 1939.

With *I Kynigi (The Huntsmen, 1977)*, Angelopoulos became once again an independent film-maker, taking over production in partnership with his brother and aided, as in *O Megalexandros*, by an advance from the second channel of West German TV. *The Huntsmen* can be seen as the completion of a modern historical trilogy begun with *Days of '36*, and it shares with the earlier film a predominantly subdued use of interiors in which a bourgeois drama of discomfiture is played out. The theatricality of *The Travelling Players* is here muted into a stylistic allusiveness, through which the composition of the frame is made to suggest a stage on which the hunters are put on trial and relive their past guilt.

The time scheme of the film is here a confrontation between the present (the film is set on New Year's Eve, 1977) and the past. On an unidentified Greek island, the body of a partisan from the 1947 Civil War is discovered buried under the snow by the hunting party: a colonel and his wife (Eva Kotamanidou); an ex-prefect of police, now a publisher; an ex-partisan, now a wealthy contractor; a politician; a film actress who collaborated with the Nazis; a Monarchist noblewoman, and a chalet owner and his wife. Blood begins to flow from the wounds in the partisan's body, and the party carry it back to the chalet, where they are interrogated by an ex-colonel and forced to give an account of their actions since the Civil War. Their New Year celebrations are interrupted by partisans who sentence them all to the firing squad, but they waken to find it has been a collective nightmare provoked by the dead body of the partisan. This they duly carry back and bury again in the snow. The film places these various representatives of the post-war Greek right on trial, and brings the historical arguments of the previous two films up to the present, but

sister becomes his stepdaughter. In the film, the story of this marriage is told by a narrator. On the wedding day, assassins hired by the landowners try to kill Alexander, but they get his wife/mother by mistake. Her bloodstained wedding gown remains beside the bed. It is all the daughter has to identify her mother with, and she wears it when Alexander has her executed.

Was your decision to cast Omero Antonutti as Alexander an attempt to give the film more of an international focus?

No. I'd seen him in *Padre Padrone* and was struck by his physical features, which seemed appropriate for the part. After all, the actor is only a vehicle in a film, which has to stand or fall on its own merits.

You have now taken over your own production. Is this due to distribution problems as well as the difficulty of finding a backer? *The Huntsmen*, for example, has had very little European

release, which was surprising after the success of *The Travelling Players*.

I went into production because there was no Greek producer prepared to put up enough money for my films, which do need a big budget. I didn't want to produce *O Megalexandros*, but it was a case of necessity. I don't know why *The Huntsmen* had such restricted release; a possible, hypothetical reason may be that some critics saw it as a Stalinist film, which certainly isn't true, and is a very subjective and superficial reading.

You said recently in an interview that you see yourself as an isolated presence in Greek cinema, with little contact with other directors.

I think that other Greek directors don't have the same problems as I do. Being Greek, I am part of Greek cinema, but not in the localised, provincial sense; and as far as style is concerned, there's no meeting point. The catchphrase of the 1979 Thessaloniki film festival was 'Death to Angelopoulos'. I'm in a privi-

leged position, being well known, and this perhaps causes communication problems for others with me, but not vice versa! But I do have rather a love-hate, father-son, psychoanalytical relationship with Greek cinema. Also I'm not a member of any political party, because I find that the Left in Greece now speaks a dead language.

You have said that you find it more difficult to make a film in Greece now than it was under the Colonels.

That's not a question of the Colonels being more cruel and repressive, but of my rapport with power. My films are very much about the problems of power, and they are political only in so far as the problems of power are political. Under the Colonels there was a clear antithesis; there was more cohesion among the people who resisted, and more coherence on the Left, whereas now it is scattered and in disarray. To give an example—the Colonels gave me permission to film inside the old Parliament,

suffers from an often repetitious, static, 'psychological' approach, punctuated once again by 'dead time'. It had a tepid critical reception at Cannes in 1977.

With *O Megalexandros* (see SIGHT AND SOUND, Spring 1980, and the interview below), Angelopoulos moves back to the first New Year's Eve of the 20th century, indicating again his concern with historical turning points, when repressive dictatorships are confronted with the hopeful dawning of a new socialist sensibility, within which there are further conflicts between Stalinist excesses, agrarian communalism and anarchism. In the legendary figure of Alexander, the 20th century cult of personality is examined through a historical lens under which his charisma is magnified; and in the muted, contained performance of Omero Antonutti—the father in the Taviani brothers' *Padre Padrone*—he becomes a hero analogous to Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible.

But the charisma, according to Antonutti, rebounds on Angelopoulos himself, in the long struggle to achieve a Greek cinema of resistance and dissent which has made him one of the few major European directors to have emerged in the past decade. 'Making a film with Angelopoulos,' Antonutti states, 'means working for five months instead of the scheduled two, living in hardship and freezing cold, dragging a 20 kilo costume around the mountains of Greece, and forgetting about personal problems. But it also means participating in an amazing adventure. Often Angelopoulos didn't show me the script until the last moment, giving me a sense of insecurity which created the right kind of tension for his tracking shots (one of which lasts for a full ten minutes). Often whole sequences were done without interruption, like a scene from Brecht. I identified with Megalexandros, but then I discovered I was mistaken; it was only a passing, instrumental identification. The real Megalexandros is Angelopoulos—perhaps some who see the film will realise it is autobiographical.'



'O Megalexandros'.

whereas now I can't get that permission. *Days of '36* is more successful now than it was at the time I made it because it conveys the sense of the silence of censorship imposed by the Colonels.

Your consistent use of tracking shots since Days of '36 has caused critics to talk about the influence of Jancsó, who now seems to have dispensed with the technique. Do you see any danger of its use becoming too arid or mechanical?

I deny that I have been influenced by Jancsó! *Plan séquence* has existed throughout the history of cinema—in Murnau's films, for example. The way that Jancsó uses tracking shots isn't real *plan séquence*; there is a fundamental difference between his use of it and mine, which I think is its real use. When I use *plan séquence*, it is to create a complete, finished scene, with inherent dialectical counterpoints. The scene is concluded, whereas in Jancsó's films there are *plans séquences* which are long, but they don't amount to finished scenes. His are lat-

eral, and convey only one meaning. As for the technique being mechanical—you don't criticise a writer for having a particularly idiosyncratic, personal style.

Do you see plan séquence as a way of arriving at a kind of alienation effect?

Not in the sense that there is any manipulation involved. I've always been irritated by the way that montage is such an artificial process, dictated by a cinema of efficacy. For example, a man enters, stops and waits. In the cinema of efficacy, this waiting is conveyed through montage, whereas in my work there is no montage—the scene exists in a time scale which is not reduced for the sake of efficacy. There is a material, concrete sense of time; real time, not evoked time. In my films 'dead time' is built in, scripted, intended. Just as music is a conjunction of sound and silence, 'dead time' in my films is musical, rhythmic—but not the rhythm of American films, where time is always cinematic time. In my films the spectator is not drawn in by

artificial means, he remains inside and outside at the same time, with the opportunity of passing judgment. The pauses, the 'dead time', give him the chance not only to assess the film rationally, but also to create, or complete, the different meanings of a sequence. As far as the question of influences is concerned, I draw techniques from everything I've seen, but the only specific influences I acknowledge are Orson Welles, for his use of *plan séquence* and deep focus, and Mizoguchi, for his use of time and off-camera space.

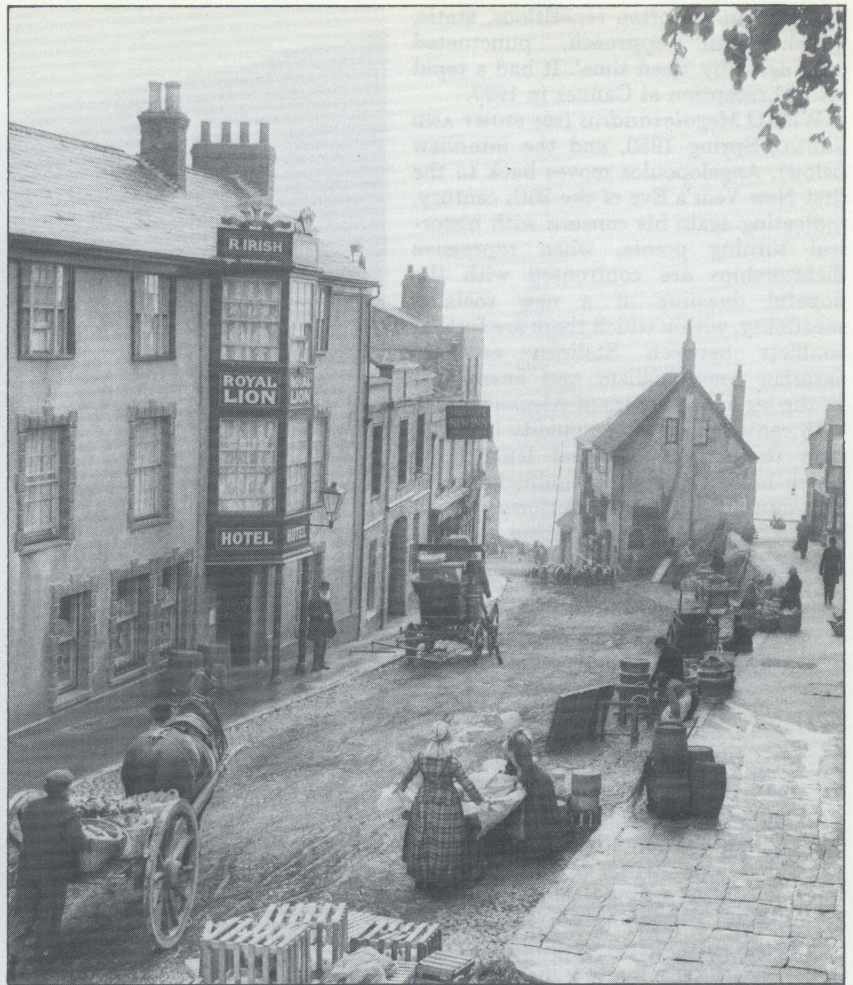
Have you any plans for a new film?

Editing *O Megalexandros* has been such a difficult and laborious job that I haven't had time for any future plans. I've had an offer from RAI, the Italian television network, to make a film about Magna Grecia, and also a number of suggestions from Germany about theatrical and operatic projects, which I find particularly strange, as I've never worked in the theatre before.



RICHARD COMBS

In search of The French Lieutenant's Woman



Left: Jeremy Irons and Meryl Streep. Above: Lyme Regis reconstructed.

The South Coast town of Kingswear is a ferry stop across river from Dartmouth, which by comparison is something of a metropolis. Kingswear does, however, boast a railway station, which was closed by British Rail as unprofitable but now does brisk business as part of a private line servicing the Dart Valley. Confirming that this is the West Country but introducing some confusion about the century, a modern joys-of-rail-travel advertisement carries an endorsement from Isambard Kingdom Brunel about how speed will enhance such journeys. The nineteenth century more forcefully returned to the twentieth at the end of October last year, when the unit of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* moved in to complete a schedule that had begun in May and taken in locations in London, the Lake District and nearby Lyme Regis. For a few days, Kingswear station stood in for the grander Victorian concourse of Exeter; a steam engine of the old Great Western Railway shunted up and down the valley for the filming of the hero's arrival; and actress Meryl Streep appeared and disappeared courtesy of Concorde for some fill-in shots, preserving the secrecy that has shrouded her work on the film throughout.

John Fowles, author of the novel which treats Victorian manners from a twentieth century perspective, also visited for a day from Lyme Regis, where most of the story is set and where he has lived for fifteen years. He noted the diminutive proportions of 'Exeter' station, but was generally sanguine about how much

period accuracy was possible or desirable. 'The period hassle is a nightmare for directors. I don't think it worries me so much. In a very early scene I did correct something which I thought was wrong, but if you start worrying too much about Victorian hand gestures, or how exactly they would have spoken, you lose all dramatic impetus.'

The question of fidelity to his novel is another, slightly more complicated matter, since the book doesn't set out to be a seamless period recreation but an attempt to use the conventions of the nineteenth century novel self-consciously, to question not only the processes of fiction but the social 'making' of the characters. Fowles was confident, however, about the way this authorial point of view had been translated in Harold Pinter's script, and reluctant to trespass by commenting on it. He was further happy that after two botched adaptations of his work, he had got his choice of director for this one, Karel Reisz.

Reisz, in fact, was approached to film the book before it was published, but turned it down because he had just finished a large period picture, *Isadora*. Since then, Fowles has discussed the project with 'hundreds—certainly dozens of producers and directors. Fred Zinnemann must have worked for two years on it; Franklin Schaffner was involved for a time; Dick Lester, Michael Cacoyannis, Lindsay Anderson. Only Zinnemann really got to serious pre-production, but he couldn't get a script

he was totally happy with, although it was by a very good man called Dennis Potter.' Fowles finally got his first pick of director ('Morgan, for me, is the best British film since the war') when Reisz was offered the project again and brought in Harold Pinter to do the screenplay. Although the creative mill doesn't quite stop there, as Reisz admits: 'I did have a try with David Mercer. We talked and talked but never got to writing. And then Harold took to it like a duck to water.'

How Meryl Streep has carried off the part of Sarah Woodruff—the lady who, in Reisz's phrase, 'rubs up against her age right from the beginning,' and in time teaches the more convention-bound hero 'to become alien, to question it'—is not the production's only closely guarded secret. The devices used to translate Fowles' teasing conjuring tricks, and particularly his two-fold ending, are also being kept under wraps. According to Fowles, 'This is Harold. We're all sworn to secrecy,' and to Reisz, 'We have some surprises up our sleeves which we'd rather keep for the viewer than the reader.' But the director is insistent that there has been no 'straightening out' of the novel. 'There are certain scenes in the film which are sort of in inverted commas. Whether that will work I don't know, but it would be a travesty of what the book is about if you didn't do that. You have to keep the audience aware that you are presenting them with an artefact. But of course you also have to involve their feelings, so it's a very



The French Lieutenant's Woman (Meryl Streep) keeps her vigil on the Cobb at Lyme Regis.

difficult line. It's partly a matter of language, which is very literary, very concentrated and very Victorian in its involutions and complex sentence structures. People are asked to say things that people aren't normally asked to say in movies, which immediately creates a kind of artificiality.'

Apart from considerations of fidelity, Reisz feels that, stripped of the author's manipulations, the story would not work anyway. 'It wouldn't make sense, because a lot of the plotting is in the commentary. Quite apart from that whole game he plays about the alternative versions, and how he's in control of the characters and so on. Which is part of the fun of the novel, and also a device that is peculiarly apt for characters who are trying to pull themselves out of the nineteenth century. So the way he writes and what he writes are one. We haven't kept his order of events, but we have tried to keep what I suppose one could call a serial structure, like Victorian novels. Our story takes place in fifteen little self-contained leaps, each of which contradicts what happened previously.' On the question of literary background, Fowles comments that the writer he had in mind was Thackeray, who also liked to tease his readers. 'Thackeray was a great one for saying, dear reader I am now going to do this, or dear reader you're quite wrong, this isn't what really happened. My book is very much like that.'

The filming in Kingswear involves a good deal of period recreation, not just of the station but of the street leading to

the hotel where Sarah and Charles Smithson (played by stage actor Jeremy Irons) will spend a night together, and where they will be observed by Charles' manservant Sam, who then commits the crucial betrayal. A good many locals have been drafted as 'authentic' faces, not just for the backgrounds but even in small parts (these are experienced non-actors, however, as Dartmouth seems to be often called on by film and TV crews). Shooting goes on until ten at night on one scene in which Sam simply crossing the road is orchestrated with various Victorian conveyances passing by over the rubber cobble-stones. Period, in this case, is both a challenge and a danger, as Reisz admits. 'There's a kind of double process going on. You use up an enormous amount of energy just saying to yourself, does that feel Victorian? But the moment you become a tourist in the period, you're dead. It's quite difficult to avoid because that world of Victorian interiors is so dominated by detail. And the moment you reproduce that faithfully you're in television-land.'

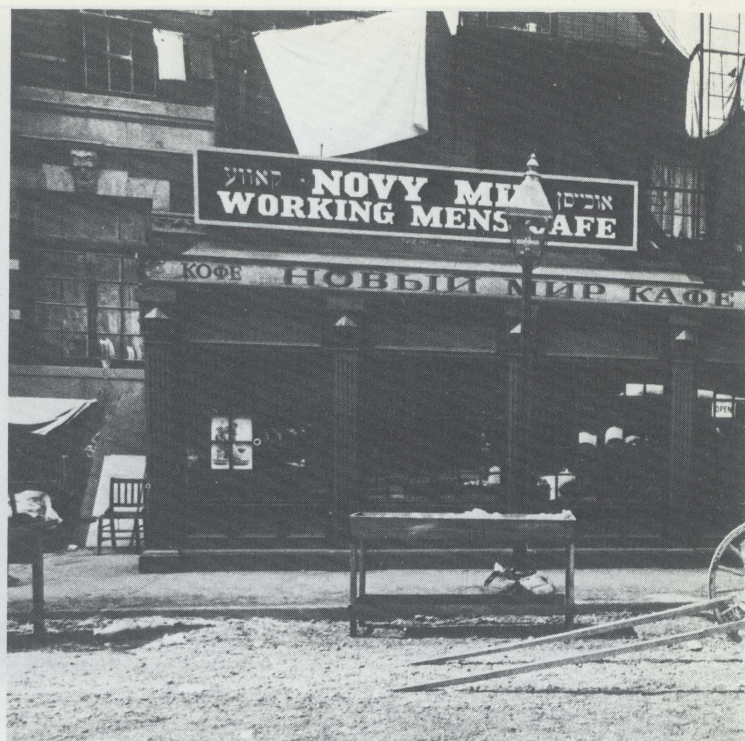
Time and setting become more ambiguous in another scene, shot the following morning, where Charles, having for a while lost Sarah, is sitting, with the abstracted tranquillity, perhaps, of the convalescent, in a garden overlooking a headland that might be anywhere in the world. A telegram then arrives announcing that she has been found. Reisz points out something which Fowles is pleased to see being admitted at last by 'most academic critics', namely that Charles is in

many ways the central character. In terms of the adaptation, and the balance with Meryl Streep's Sarah—according to Reisz, a character whose 'nature is absolute, who won't brook any compromise' played by an actress of great authority who is happiest going 'beyond naturalism'—the character of Charles has been significantly revised.

'Charles is a bigger character than Sarah, he is in all the events, so the pull between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or between manners and feelings, is in him. In the novel he is rather passive, a person of sensibility but not much authority. We've tried to make a film about the sentimental education of a decent Victorian chap. He starts more innocent and ends more knowing than in the book.' The commercial success of the film, Reisz feels, will depend on how audiences respond to this change in Charles. 'He is a rather chilly, forbidding person, for the first half of the story at least. He does some fairly awful things, because his feelings are so covert, so manners-ridden. The risk is whether audiences will go with him, will want him to be enlightened.'

Inevitably, there are little more than glimmerings at the moment of how Fowles' double ending will be handled. The setting is no longer London, and the *ménage* of the Rossettis, but the ambiguity has been preserved. 'We've got a sort of happy ending. But you don't know whether that's what he should be doing. I think you know that she should be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39



1911: East

Last summer, after some seven years preparation, the adaptation of E. L. Doctorow's novel *Ragtime*, the fictional saga of a Jewish immigrant family growing up in 'historical' modern America, finally started shooting on Manhattan's Lower East Side. In the autumn, director Milos Forman's



Gene Coll's photographs suggest a striking period atmosphere. Here he describes the background.

'East 11th Street. Notices for extra casting were wall posted in early June for neighbourhood people who wanted

to appear in the street scenes. Many of these people were employed as carpenters, assistants and nightwatchmen. The street was open, when not filming, to any passer-by.

'Set building went into full swing during July. Carpenters re-dressed

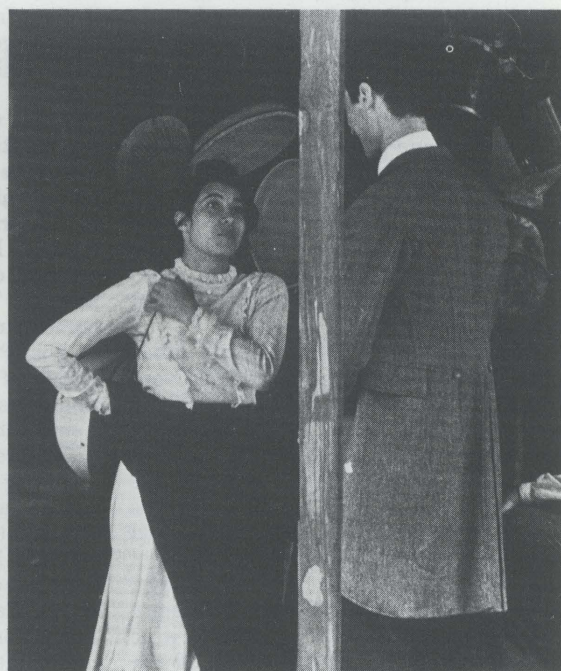
most of the ground-floor entrances with fake façades or embellished the existing architecture. By August the street had been "dressed" New York circa 1911, with dirt and hay covering the blacktop and a dense hanging of laundry covering the sky.



11th Street

production transferred from New York to Shepperton. *Ragtime*'s screenwriter Michael Weller and director of photography Miroslav Ondricek both previously worked on Forman's film of the stage musical *Hair*.

Photographs: GENE COLL



'Shooting began on Monday, 3 August. About fifty extras in heavy period costume, many horses and electric cars worked through the day. The heat ranged from 76° at 8 in the morning to 90° F at 2 in the afternoon. Filming continued for about two weeks

on East 11th Street. Another location was the old vegetable markets on 1st Avenue.

'The New York Screen Actors Guild is associated with the Guild on the West Coast, but New York was not immediately affected by the Los

Angeles actors' strike. As the New York locations were being filmed, a recreation of Stanford White's Madison Square Garden was being prepared at Shepperton as the setting for scenes involving the octogenarian James Cagney.'

GDANSK 1980

DAVID ROBINSON

SINCE THE historic strikes at the Gdansk shipyards carried on right to the end of August, it began to seem less and less likely that the Polish annual National Feature Film Festival would take place there as scheduled. The day following the settlement of the strike however—one week before the planned opening date of 8 September—the foreign visitors were informed by telegram that their visas and air tickets were waiting and in order. As we later discovered, planning for the Festival had gone ahead even when all other departments of cinema activity in the city had been closed down.

Everything testified to the importance attached to the event, and to the real significance of the role that film-makers, led by Andrzej Wajda and Krzysztof Zanussi, had assumed in the past year or so, as the public moralists of the nation. With the hindsight of the events of autumn 1980, it became only clearer how acute and responsible was the critical commentary on the Polish moral situation provided by their remarkable group of new films shown at Gdansk in 1979—they included Wajda's *Rough Treatment*, Kieslowski's *Camera Buff*, Agnieszka Holland's *Provincial Actors*, Piotr Andrejew's *Clinch*, Feliks Falk's *Chance*, Janusz Kijowski's *Kung Fu*.

In an account of the 1979 Gdansk Festival, I quoted the critic Jacek Foksiewicz, whose article 'Moral Concern, Public Spirit' also takes on a new significance now: 'The cinema ought to ... indicate the things that disturb, discern among what is the expected outcome of our action that which is incidental and unwelcome, and point to what may, if not seen in time or discounted, be sources of our weakness. The list will include, as well as familiar and diagnosed ailments which social policy is attacking, ones which are still embryonic and only glimpsed or sensed by literature and the cinema: examples are loss of moral sensibilities and bearings, of consumer attitudes developing into acquisitiveness, self-seeking and careerism, of instrumental and manipulative treatment of people, of inability to adjust to the advances in the democratisation of our lives, of the emergence of pseudo-élites arrogating to themselves special privileges, of hypocrisy, cynicism and opportunism.'

Never perhaps has a festival taken place in an atmosphere so charged, and in such close proximity to history. There was really no other possible topic, whether individual reactions to current events were euphoria or anxiety for the immediate future. The Lenin Shipyards are near the Festival headquarters; and were, indeed, one of the local sponsors of the event. Wajda spent two days there; but then, he knows the place well, since the last scenes of *Man of Marble* were filmed there. The headquarters of the New Trade Unions were a few minutes' ride away, and it was almost *de rigueur* for the Western guests and most of the Polish film-makers to visit.

The scene there seemed oddly familiar to those of us brought up on classic Soviet revolutionary films. The headquarters is an old many-storeyed hotel for shipyard people; and a new notice

'BUFE' had been firmly placed over the former 'COCKTAIL BAR'. People gathered in excited debates on all the stairs and landings: the population was almost equally divided between workers, cheery middle-aged women and angel-faced students still on vacation. Lech Walesa himself was at that moment battling with migraines and a killing non-stop schedule of interviews, negotiations and the creation of an organisation.

Walesa was to return the visit on the night before the award ceremony when, in company with the Minister of Culture and other official people, he attended the showing of two hours of mute roughcut filmed in the last days of the strike. He is reported to have apologised to the film-makers at the screening for their inability to shoot certain scenes. But the signature of the settlement, and his world-famous Pope pen, were certainly in the film.

The midnight showing of this shipyard roughcut was a surprise, but Poland at that moment was full of surprises and uncertainty. 'Yesterday my script was rejected,' someone would tell you. 'But tomorrow I think it will be OK.' Festival bulletins ordinarily make dull reading, but the Gdansk ones could not have been livelier, from the very first issue, with its front-page panoramic picture of the shipyard strikers. Above all, the bulletins reflected the general, elated conviction that this was a moment of genuine moral regeneration when the truth not only might be told but must be told. 'The truth,' said one issue of the bulletin, in its editorial, 'is a very delicate kind of luggage. It cannot stand being shuffled around on carts pushed by hurried porters.' The bulletin poured out daily home truths about the needs and aims of the Polish cinema, about the past abuses of the distribution system which would restrict the distribution of an uncomfortable film so as to demonstrate unfavourable box-office returns.

Among other surprises, one day everyone was assembled to see a group of five documentaries which until that very moment had been strictly banned; and these were the most startling things seen at the Festival. Here, set down maybe a year or more before, were the very complaints and the aspirations that the Polish workers had so recently been expressing. Zbigniew Raplewski's *Workers' Voices* is an attack on managements who return only double-talk to the working people's complaints about inadequate supplies and bad conditions. Marcel Lozinski's *Microphone Test* more aggressively exposes the fiction of worker participation in a cos-

metics factory. Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Talking Heads* explores a history of attitudes by whisking the spectator through a pageant of Poles ranging from a two-year-old to a centenarian, and asking them the same questions about their identity and their expectations of life. The most startling of the group was Irena Kamienska's *Working Women*, which exposes a neglected provincial textile factory where women employees voice their protests against conditions of employment that betray a Victorian carelessness about people's welfare.

Oddly, the official feature selection for 1980 was far less impressive than in the previous year. The 1979 films were, of course, exceptional as a group. This time, the Poles assured us, the most important films were not yet completed. A delay of three or four months would have produced a much more exciting display than this one, which did not include any new film by Holland, Kieslowski, Kijowski or Falk. Taking the group as a whole, however, it was significant that so many (10 films out of 28) were by new directors; and that the dominant theme, whether the films were contemporary (five films out of the total) or historical, was individuality—individual fulfilment, individual responsibility, individual awareness.

The Gdansk Grand Prix was awarded to Kazimierz Kutz's *Beads of One Rosary*, which of all the films shown appeared to chime most closely with the new aspirations of the Polish workers' movement. Ostensibly it is an anecdote about an old man whose individualism seems even eccentricity; but it ends up as a fundamental reflection on the relationship of the individual and the machinery that represents society. The hero is an old retired miner who stolidly rejects all efforts to remove him from his lifelong home to a new block of miners' flats, and all those mod. cons. for which he has only the deepest disdain. With fierce humour Kutz—for whom this completes a trilogy of films about the coal-mines of Silesia—asserts the rights and dignity of the individual. He is abetted by two majestically comic performances by non-professional actors—an old miner who first attracted Kutz's attention by proposing that his own real life would make a good film scenario; and a miner's stout wife.

Apart from this, the major films were Wajda's *The Conductor*, and Zanussi's *Constans* and his made-for-TV feature *Kontrakt*, respectively the Polish entries at Berlin, Cannes and Venice.

The Conductor suffers from an uncharacteristic lack of finish (aggravated



'Public moralists of the nation'. Above left: Krystyna Janda and John Gielgud in Andrzej Wajda's *'The Conductor'*. Right and below: Zanussi's *'Constans'*.



by some uncertainty over language and dubbing conventions in the case of John Gielgud's central role). Perhaps this comes from the haste and urgency by which at that point Wajda felt impelled in getting out his messages. The film is essentially a parable. A great conductor returns to his native Poland after fifty years. He is old, dying, hallucinated by memory; yet his artistry still has a confidence and ease and the power to electrify the struggling provincial orchestra in a way that all the vigour and bullying of their young resident director cannot achieve. Beneath the element of character drama, however, it is a metaphor of disquiet at the cultural failures of a socialist system, revealed most clearly in a scene where the provincial musicians cluster round the saviour from abroad to confide all the reasons for their inadequacies. As I commented from Berlin, 'The parallels seem at times so significant that it is a surprise to learn that the film was shot *before* Pope John Paul's visit to Poland.'

Zanussi's two films *Constans* and *Kontrakt* seem to form the two halves of a diptych, which is perhaps not altogether surprising since, incredibly, they were shot practically simultaneously, one for the cinema and one for television. *Constans* depicts a young man honourably trying to resist the petty corruption he sees around him not

only in the organisation in which he works, which is responsible for arranging official exhibitions overseas, but even in the hospital where he must put his dying mother. Superficially, this is a theme that other film-makers have already explored. Zanussi's approach characteristically goes much deeper in its sophistication, dealing with aspects of fatalism, and confronting much thornier and more fundamental issues in the young man's search for an abstract morality (the 'constant factor' of the title) in a society where morality, by ideological precept, is only relative.

The Contract shows, in contrast, people not resisting but positively conforming to notions of morality that have become softened and blurred. The action is mostly set at a prolonged wedding party; and the film builds up a grotesque black comedy new to Zanussi. The older people drink and talk and bit by bit drop the masks of mature civic responsibility. The grand relation-by-marriage from abroad (Leslie Caron) turns out to be a kleptomaniac and her daughter a slut. The young despair. The bride has already run away from the wedding; the groom gets drunk, sets the house on fire and is finally led off to the mental hospital. Zanussi—now embarked on a filmed biography of the Pope—reveals himself as a considerable comic moralist for his stirring times. ■

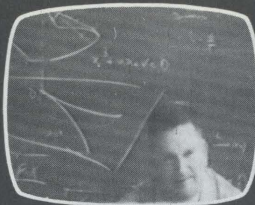
IN SEARCH OF THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

continued from page 35

doing it.' Fowles was even more reluctant, on the grounds of professional courtesy, to discuss the point. Of the two endings (which in the first draft of his novel, apparently, had been in the reverse order), he confessed, 'They've found a rather neat way of leaving it.' Of Pinter's script, 'What really struck me was how much better it was than all the previous ones. Mainly in the brilliant compression. I don't believe in exact fidelity. The kind of director I've learned to distrust is the one who says, Mr Fowles, I love your book, I'm not going to change a line of it. I think in all good conversions, the scriptwriter finds a metaphor for the novel, he doesn't try to reproduce it.'

Given that one of Fowles' preoccupations has been the way people define themselves through language, and the tussle over English as it is used in England and in America—'I think I'm possibly more fond of the American way now'—the cross-Atlantic casting of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is interesting. 'When Zinnemann was trying to get a production going, we had an absurd afternoon, in which I was arguing that an American actress would be the best solution, and it was the American director who was saying it must be a British actress. Even in the book I suggested that the kind of freedom Sarah was trying to get was more typical of mid-nineteenth century America than of Britain.' Ironically, on the film of *The Collector*, where Fowles had no credited participation in the script, he worked for a month in Hollywood, 'sort of putting it back into British English.'

As the history of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* project shows, Fowles has a greater acquaintance with the film world than one might expect, and admits to being, until recently, a constant filmgoer. He suggests some possible equations: is *Citizen Kane* the *Ulysses* of cinema, is Satyajit Ray its Jane Austen? *The Collector* at one time was to be a small-budget, black-and-white, art-house film, possibly to be directed by Robert Bresson. 'I was born in 1926, and anyone born after the time when the cinema became popular and easily accessible has been deeply influenced in the way you tell stories. I did at one time analyse my dreams in great detail, and I've recognised there that you get jump cuts and cross cuts. One must think a bit with the camera now. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, I was quite definitely making cinema cuts here and there in the narrative. But the last novel I wrote, *Daniel Martin*, was deliberately designed to be unfilmable, because I think there are things the novel can do that the cinema never can. I've always wanted to write a book where you see a character as a boy and an adolescent and a grown man. And in the cinema that's one of the most notorious nightmares. But the rights to *Daniel Martin* have been sold, again to a director I like, Sydney Pollack, who wanted to do *The French Lieutenant's Woman* ...' ■



Jean-Luc Godard

2 INTO 3

October 1980 yielded a rich harvest for Jean-Luc Godard's English admirers. In a feat of co-ordination which it will be difficult to reproduce, the opening of his new film, *Sauve qui peut (La Vie)*, coincided with a full-scale retrospective at the National Film Theatre and with the publication of *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* in which Colin McCabe, with contributions from Laura Mulvey and Mick Eaton, has provided what is the first systematic attempt to present and defend Godard's post-1968 work.

The new film is Janus-faced: it is a *summa* and a recapitulation of what has gone before, gathering together many of the themes which have preoccupied Godard since he made his début more than twenty years ago. But it also looks forward and is more properly described as a 'second first work' than as a remake—which was what *Numéro deux* purported to be—for it is as innovatory as was *A bout de souffle* in its day, especially and characteristically in tone and in the attention given to technical experimentation. The implications of the title *Sauve qui peut (La Vie)* (the English title *Slow Motion* points up different aspects of the film) force a reassessment of the structure of the Godardian oeuvre in which 1968 is usually treated as a



Jean-Luc Godard.

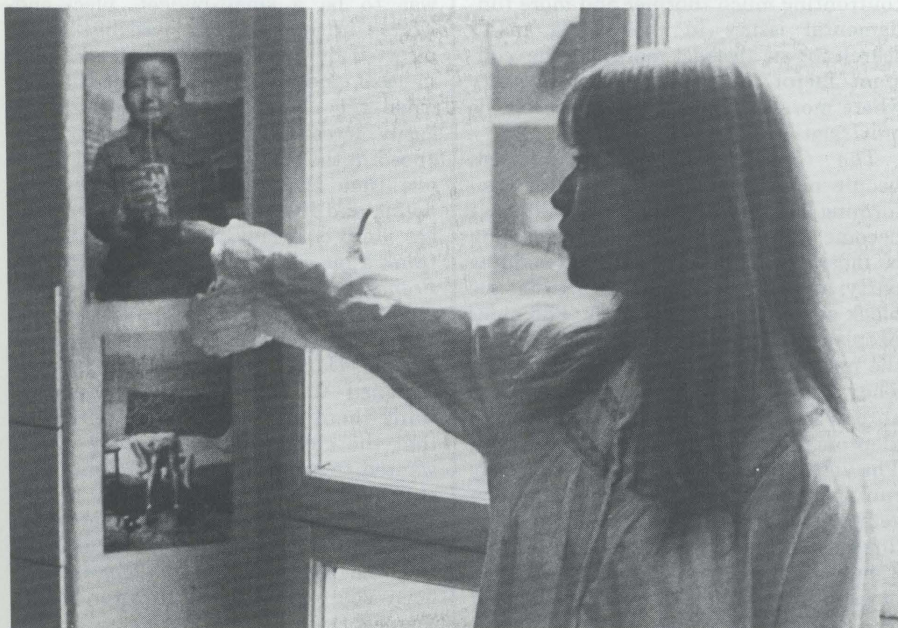
Jill Forbes

watershed: connotations of catastrophe ('devil take the hindmost') are juxtaposed with the (ironic) blandness of *Tout va bien* ('everything's all right') but offer a reprise of the dynamic of *A bout de souffle* ('breathless'). Godard, it might be said, 'keeps on running'. No one would suggest that 1968 was not of overriding importance, but other structures are possible.

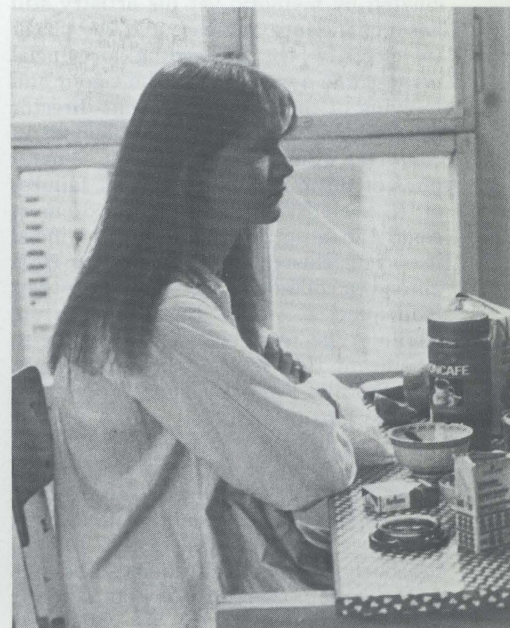
With a première at the NFT and the London opening preceding that in Paris, it would appear that Godard has finally

gained the esteem of the London film-going public. But it is not certain that he has finally shaken off the 'nouvelle vague' tag which has so inappropriately continued to associate him with former friends such as Truffaut and Chabrol. Truffaut's thoroughly disobliging remarks about Godard in the September issue of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, or Godard's unfavourable comparison of *La Nuit américaine* with *Le Mépris* in *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma* (the transcript of a series of lectures given at the Cinémathèque in Montreal in 1978), underline personal divergences which have not always been apparent from the two film-makers' recent work. This is because in the decade following 1968 Godard disappeared from public view while Truffaut continued to turn out films of varying quality whose common feature was the regularity of their appearance on French screens.

Of course, as Colin McCabe emphasises, Godard's 'disappearance' was not an abandonment of film-making or a withdrawal from the world, but an evasion of habitual production and distribution circuits. Nevertheless, with the exception of *Tout va bien* (1972), and the possible exception of *Numéro deux* (1975)—both of which received limited



Sauve qui peut: Isabelle (Isabelle Huppert) and child of Mao and Coca-Cola.



Isabelle breakfasts with a client.



Left to right: 'Jean-Luc' (first two pictures). 'Sur et sous la communication': the mathematician René Thom; 'Nous trois', in which 'faces' are juxtaposed in a frenzy of 'image-making' (MacCabe); 'Louison', about the French countryside.

commercial distribution—there is a huge gap between *Weekend* (1967) and *Sauve qui peut* in the minds and memories of all but a few privileged viewers. The admiration, even reverence, which Godard arouses is more an act of faith than a considered point of view, when what MacCabe calculates as the twelve films and eighteen hours of television programmes Godard has made since 1968 are less in need of rehabilitation than of being made visible to enough people.

To use the notations employed in *Sur et sous la communication* (made for French television in 1976), the distance travelled between *Weekend* and *Sauve qui peut* might be succinctly described as 'two becomes three'. Here, probably for the first time, the problematic of the couple is decentred in the structure of the film, a movement which was foreshadowed in *Tout va bien* with the politicisation of marital relations and in *Numéro deux* when the couple was framed in a more extended family and their children's roles were emphasised. This is not so much a question of a head count of protagonists—*Une femme mariée* involved three people in an 'eternal triangle'—as a question of the organisation of the film. Godard's trio in *Sauve qui peut* form a circle rather than a triangle and their interactions offer a point of entry into the film.

Jacques Dutronc plays Paul Godard, and the section or chapter in which he is most visible is entitled 'Fear' ('La peur'). Is Paul Godard the self-portrait the name would seem to suggest? He works in television, and aspects of his life, notably his exclusion by the women he knows, about whom he nurtures obsessive and unsatisfied interests, conform to one

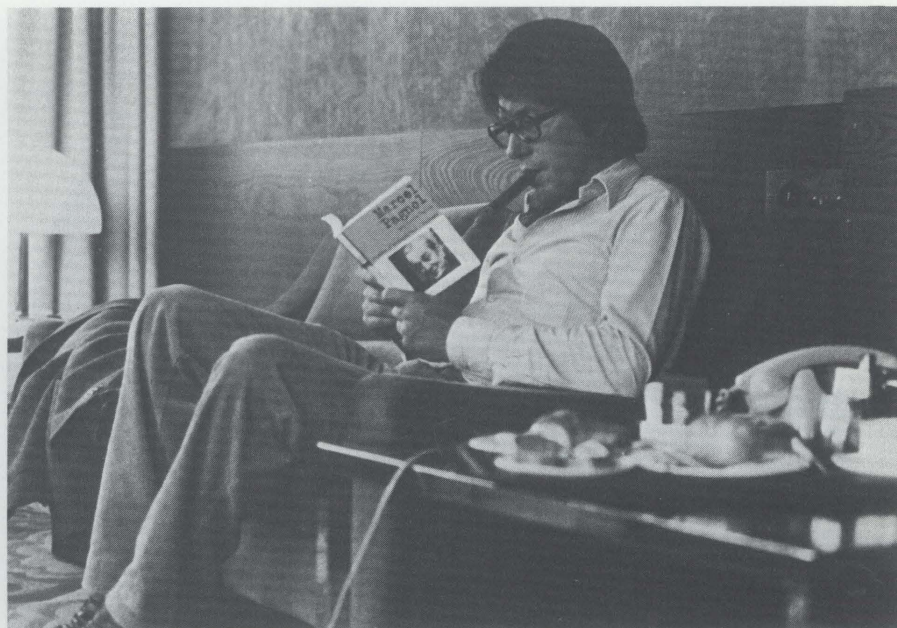
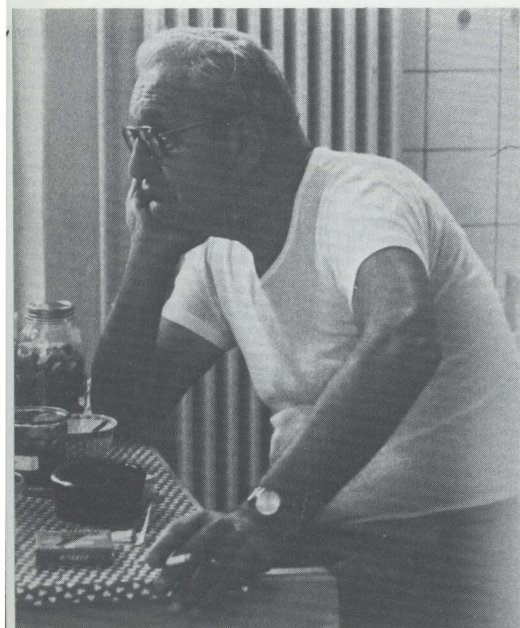
popular image of Godard as a paranoid voyeur. Paul Godard might be considered a low-key version of Ferdinand in *Pierrot le fou* (whose dying words he echoes at the end of *Sauve qui peut*), but Dutronc, with his shambling refusal to look at the camera, is more obviously a close relation of many of Godard's other male protagonists who are somehow incapable or incapacitated, whether because they refuse the traditional function of fathering children, as in *Une femme est une femme*, or because, as in *Une femme mariée*, they are literally or metaphorically absent from the preoccupations of the women. *Sauve qui peut* ends in female complicities: Nathalie Baye agrees to let the apartment Godard might have lived in to Isabelle Huppert (Isabelle Rivière), while Godard's ex-wife and daughter leave him to die after he has been knocked down by a car which contains Isabelle's sister.

'La peur' is framed by 'L'imaginaire' (the imaginary) and 'Le commerce' (trade/intercourse) whose conjunction completes the circle and is equivalent to the 'production' of 'images'. 'L'imaginaire' centres on Nathalie Baye as the journalist Denise Rimbaud who is about to abandon her job in television to work for a local community newspaper in the country. She is also working on a 'project' of her own and is intermittently seen in the characteristic posture of the Godardian creator, sucking a pencil and making notes. *Sauve qui peut* represents the culmination of a process, in Godard's films, whereby writing is transformed from an object into an activity and is increasingly associated with the imaginary as it becomes decreasingly 'motivated'. The process begins with episodes such as the famous sequence of conver-

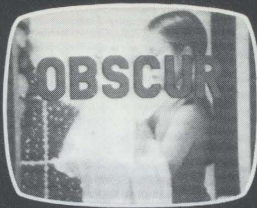
sation through the titles of books in *Une femme est une femme* ('motivated' because the books are part of the set) and the habit, throughout Godard's early films, of framing parts of the inscriptions on hoardings so as to reveal their hidden meanings. By *La Chinoise* it is the act of slogan-writing which has become important, while the process ends with *Sur et sous la communication* where a frenzy of writing erupts on the screen.

In *Sauve qui peut* this is an artistic event. We never see what Baye writes, only that she is writing, something which, Godard asserted as long ago as 1962, is only quantitatively and not qualitatively different from making a film. Denise Rimbaud also shares a surname with the poet Arthur, and her flight from the city parallels Rimbaud's earlier renunciation of the Paris world of letters, and a relationship which had become oppressive, for the existence of a colonial entrepreneur far from the metropolitan centre. Baye's departure is less radical—a train still links her with Dutronc—but as she rides her bicycle along the open roads with the mountains rising behind her, the freedom of the wide spaces is established as a contrast to the gadget-ridden hotel which is Dutronc's home.

It is difficult, too, not to see the similarities between Rimbaud's trajectory and J.-L. Godard's—at least in the myths which have grown up around them. Remarks Godard has made over the past few years (most coherently via *Avant et après*, the programme which concluded the *Sur et sous la communication* series) suggest that by moving first to Grenoble and then to Rolle in Switzerland he was striking a blow against centralisation and the traditional divisions of labour in the film industry. In *Introduction à une*



Paul Godard (Jacques Dutronc).



véritable histoire du cinéma he adds that his moves have had an effect on the content of his films, which must now be such that he is not embarrassed to go into the local café. But for all Godard's assertions, and his clear efforts to discover new relations of production, the mythical version of his life holds that, like the poet Rimbaud, Godard after 1968 abruptly became silent, exchanging his artistic activities for those of a businessman.

This is, of course, Isabelle's activity in *Sauve qui peut*. Her chapter, 'Le commerce', reveals her as the latest in a long line of Godardian prostitutes whose emblematic nature is evident, from 'Nana' in *Vivre sa vie* to the film-maker who sold out played by Yves Montand in *Tout va bien*. But Isabelle gives a different emphasis to the profession: *Vivre sa vie* suggested that economic constraints impair Nana's emotional freedom, whereas by *Deux ou trois choses* prostitution has become the exemplary condition of women under capitalism (this is extended to all workers in *Tout va bien* and applied, with shocking violence, to the family in *Numéro deux*).

As MacCabe suggests, a central point of *Deux ou trois choses* is the elision of the distinction between criminal and legal money, a point which is taken up in *Sauve qui peut* and treated comically. Isabelle Huppert walks through the part with splendid unconcern: so natural is her activity that she emerges unscathed when two pimps rough her up in a car, and simply passes their extortionary tactics down the line to her sister from whom she demands 50 per cent in return for an introduction to clients. Isabelle's business is the pretext for a number of comic set pieces, the most elaborate

being her participation in a foursome ('partie carrée') which includes a businessman (Roland Amstutz), his (male) assistant and another (female) prostitute. Amstutz disposes them in a chain reaction which is a sequence of sexual penetrations and accompanying exclamations that run full circle. In communications technology this would be described as a feedback system while in the Godardian bestiary it is the equivalent of the fish eating its tail which, in *Leçons de choses*, we are informed is the image of the capitalist system. In *Sauve qui peut* the scene is also a *mise en abîme* since Isabelle's business is what permits the trio's circle of relationships to be closed.

She assumes the prostitute's (narrative) function—traditional since Zola's *Nana*—of crossing social barriers and linking characters whose association would otherwise be arbitrary, when she picks up Dutronc/Godard just after he has had a serious quarrel with Denise. But she also concludes a deal with Denise at the end of the film which is both a perfectly legal commercial transaction and a specific means of excluding Paul Godard. Thus when Isabelle operates 'legitimately' she is also naturalised. Colin MacCabe makes a number of interesting observations on the relation between the 'order of money' and the 'order of the image' which will be referred to below, but a provisional reading of the deal between Baye and Huppert is as the conjunction of business and the imaginary which expels the male.

However intriguing the film-maker's personal history may be, it would do less than justice to the richness of *Sauve qui peut* to assume, as some critics have wished to do, that the film is an essay in

self-presentation, a portrait of the artist as a man of fifty. It is already clear that each of the three main characters embodies aspects of the film-making activity—a fragmentation which has perhaps always been present in Godard's thinking but which has recently become more insistent. At one level, fragmentation is more appropriately considered as group activity, particularly in the case of the strength which derived from collaboration with like-minded professionals during the 'nouvelle vague' period (cf. *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma* p. 101). After 1968, the notion is inflected to embrace new forms of organisation, first with the Dziga Vertov group and Jean-Pierre Gorin—of whom Godard says: 'There had to be at least two of us, and after that we had to try to be three. But I never managed that'—and later with the foundation of the Sonimage Company in Grenoble.

Collaborative activities and less hierarchical work practices seem to have found partial achievement on the shooting of *Sauve qui peut* and the work of Sonimage in general, and the need for greater flexibility is a thread which runs through Godard's remarks in the conversations with MacCabe printed in *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*. On the other hand, some of the things Godard has said about fragmentation are considerably more gnomic. In the episode of *Sur et sous la communication* entitled *René(s)*, where he talks with the mathematician René Thom, Godard remarks that unlike most people he considers himself not as a whole number but as a fraction. He reiterated this notion before an audience which had viewed *Sauve qui peut* at the 1980 Avignon Festival (see *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Oct. 1980), where he implied



Sauve qui peut: Outside a cinema, Paul Godard is propositioned by Isabelle.



Paul Godard, winged by the car carrying



'France/tour/detour/deux/enfants'; the first episode. The children in a television studio; Camille undressing for bed; 'considerations of obscurity and chemistry, the processes by which we start a night or a television programme' (MacCabe).

that it was a simultaneous approach to the problem of work practices and to the problem of identity. If this is so, it would appear to be a departure from what he calls the Maoism of *René(s)* in which he attempts to summarise catastrophe theory as a version of Mao's 'one is transformed into two and two into one', and more broadly, a departure from the Manichean underpinning of so much of his work, including to some extent *Sauve qui peut*.

Like *Le Mépris*, *Tout va bien* and certain episodes of *Sur et sous la communication*, *Sauve qui peut* is a film explicitly about the institution of cinema (the 'politics of the image'), but one which sees fragmentation as affecting the material which can be experimented with. There is a scene in which Dutronc/Godard is invited to say something to a film club about the work of Marguerite Duras when he places himself in front of a blackboard on which is written 'Cain and Abel Cinema and Video'. Both *Numéro deux* and *Sauve qui peut* are limited examples of work in both film and video, and freedom of passage between the two is the kind of step forward Godard is concerned to make. However, in *Sauve qui peut* the most obvious experiments occur in the lyrical passages which have to do with women's movements and women's voices. The English title *Slow Motion* makes sense of some of the most painterly scenes, notably when as Nathalie Baye climbs the hill on her bike, her movements are decomposed and the landscape dissolves into points of colour and light.

Similar attention is drawn to the soundtrack by the periodic repetition of the phrase 'what's that music?', but most

of all in the homage to Marguerite Duras, who is present only as a voice in the film (she refused to appear as, fictionally, she refuses to take part in Denise Rimbaud's programme), a voice that is accompanied by snatches of the music from *India Song* and by the comment that 'a lorry is a woman's voice going by'. The reference, which explains the large number of shots of women passing by heavy lorries, is to Duras' *Le Camion* (*The Lorry*)—a film about a film which exists only as a soundtrack, and it may help to account for the title and incident of the last chapter of *Sauve qui peut*: 'La Musique'. Godard has occasionally described his ambition as that of 'making music in the country', which is undoubtedly an oblique way of saying that attention must be drawn to the relation between sound and image through the creation of incongruity. It will be recalled that just such an episode was, literally, inserted into *Weekend*, and similar moments are encountered in *Sauve qui peut*: a stray accordion player and his family (twice) and a string orchestra which has set up in the middle of the city and serenades Dutronc/Godard's daughter as she walks away from her dying father.

It would appear that the distance Godard has covered over the last decade and more, notionally between *Weekend* and *Sauve qui peut*, is immense—both because the concerns of the period 1968–80 have fed in to *Sauve qui peut* and because the viewing public has simultaneously evolved. *Sauve qui peut* does not take up where *Weekend* left off—far from it. On the other hand, a brief comparison of the two films does allow the specific originality of *Sauve qui peut* to emerge more clearly.

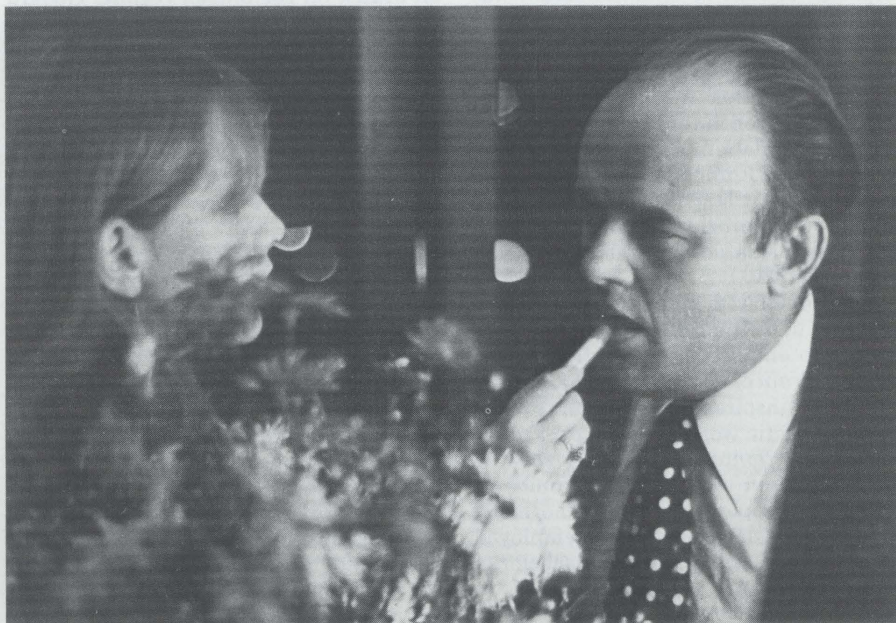
Weekend already introduced a range

of heterogeneous elements into what was a highly organised structure in much the same way as *Sauve qui peut*. It is particularly interesting that both films open with an overpoweringly loud soundtrack (to the point of parody in *Sauve qui peut*, where Jacques Dutronc is bedevilled in his attempts to speak by an opera singer rehearsing in the next room) which frustrates the spectator's immediate attempts to follow a narrative. Each film also begins as the narrative of a couple's relationship and degenerates/develops into something rather different (this relationship is much more obliquely narrated in *Sauve qui peut* but it is nevertheless there). The two films share moments of visual humour, absurd or surreal juxtapositions: the piano in the farmyard in *Weekend*, an overdressed woman (prostitute?) walking down a country lane passing by a browsing cow in *Sauve qui peut*, or a futuristically shaped sports car, with 'Marlboro' painted all over it, drawing up in a village square. These last two examples point up a marked difference, however, since *Sauve qui peut* poses the problem of the relation between the rural and the urban, the 'country and the city' in a way that *Weekend* did not (the country was then a place for city-dwellers to overrun). For Godard, and no doubt for all those who work in France, this is partly a problem of centralisation and regional autonomy, and for Godard in particular it is exacerbated by his origins in a linguistically and culturally satellite State.

It is also true that *Sauve qui peut*, like *Numéro deux*, but unlike all the earlier films, is unusual in not being firmly rooted in the immediate social and political concerns of France. *Alphaville*, *Deux ou trois choses*, *Weekend*, *Une femme*



Isabelle's sister (Anna Baldaccini).



Isabelle services a businessman (Roland Amstutz).

mariée, in all these films Godard seizes on the topics of interest to contemporary sociology—urbanisation, affluence, the embourgeoisement of the working class; while the 'foresight' of *La Chinoise* is, by now, legendary. Godard has been a notorious intellectual magpie, but *Sauve qui peut* has little of his earlier frenetic modishness except, occasionally, in the character of Denise Rimbaud, whose move to the country is perhaps representative of the aspirations of a certain social group or generation. It is, however, a film in which the inconsequential narrative cannot easily be made to signify without an understanding of the way in which political concern has been broadened from the specific issues evoked in the earlier films, a process which is most apparent in the television programmes Godard made in the intervening years.

Two recent series of television programmes (in addition to the commissioned works such as *Le Gai Savoir* and *British Sounds*) are of particular importance: *Six Fois deux/Sur et sous la communication* (Six times two/On and under communication, 1976) and *France/Tour/Détour/Deux/Enfants* (France/Tour/Détour/Two Children, 1978). Both were Sonimage/Institut National de l'Audiovisuel co-productions, but if this was seen as a potentially encouraging sign that after the reform of the ORTF in 1974 French television was prepared to adopt a more dynamic production policy, it also turned out to be the proof that the division of the old broadcasting corporation into a number of quasi-autonomous companies was a device to emasculate it—specifically by divorcing production from distribution. In fact, the exhibition history of these two series is an exemplary instance of indirect censorship. *Sur et sous la communication* was programmed on the Third ('minority') Channel, FR3, on Sunday evenings between 25 July and 29 August 1976—precisely, in other words, over a period when every French town is closed up and half the population is on the beach. The adventures of *France/Tour/Détour* were similar, since it languished for two years before being programmed in the late-night art cinema slot on Fridays in March and April 1980.

Being exhibited in this way was particularly unfortunate, since both series set out to enquire into the state of the nation—*France/Tour/Détour* because it was freely inspired by G. Bruno's celebrated didactic work *La Tour de France par deux enfants*; and *Sur et sous la communication* in the opportunity it offered to people who do not normally appear on television (an unemployed charwoman, a semi-catatonic bachelor, a mountain farmer, a watchmaker) to express themselves at some length. But even under ideal conditions, reception of

these series poses difficulties. Clearly each was designed as a 'serial', though this is more evident in the repetitiousness of *France/Tour/Détour*, which carries structure and actors over from one week to the next, than in the apparent inconsequentiality of *Sur et sous la communication* (indeed, *France/Tour/Détour* turned on internal repetitions, since three 'movements' were programmed each Friday night). However, seeing this series 'in context', that is week after week on Antenne 2, was no easier (though this is a personal reaction) than seeing *Sur et sous la communication* in two six-hour periods at the National Film Theatre. The programmes truly become pleasurable when the viewer can watch with tapes and a monitor, outside the normal 'flow' of television or the inappropriately theatrical atmosphere of a cinema. To some extent, therefore, Godard has made programmes for the kind of television which does not yet exist.

Aside from Godard's somewhat unsuccessful attempts to get René Thom to place communications theory in a broader scientific context, *Sur et sous la communication's* explicit reflection on television is contained in the penultimate programme *Avant et après* (Before and After). Thoughts on the nature of the medium are communicated in exemplary fashion from unseen transmitter (Godard?), through the headphones worn by the young man on screen who receives the prompted messages and retransmits them. Television, it is asserted, is a vast swindle, a mystification: though it is 'just a screen on which things are written', there are actually 'three of us in TV, the transmitter (speaker), the receiver (citizen), and the set (screen)' so that TV becomes 'a family affair' and intervenes 'between' 'you' and 'me'. There follows an attack on the *ancien régime*: Godard considers the process of transmission to be as cumbersome and inappropriate as communications in pre-revolutionary France which necessitated innumerable passages through internal customs barriers. Television, it is asserted, needs a SECAM passport to travel in France, when what is required is a communications system which will allow Godard to address his neighbour without passing through Paris—in short, a utopian revolution (*rêve-évolution*).

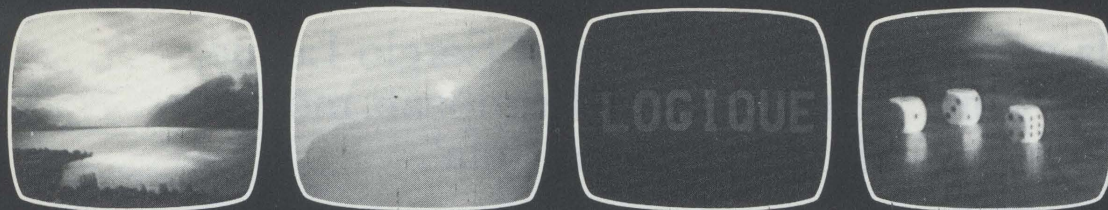
Thus *Sur et sous la communication* is placed at the intersection—or the interface—where 'two becomes three', as is suggested by *Nous trois* (Us Three), the first half of the fifth programme, in which a pair of lovers 'communicate' not through speech (there is no soundtrack) but 'through' television as their changing relationship is expressed in the decomposed and recomposed forms generated by vision-mixing. The idea is reinforced by innumerable witty developments of the principle of a chain of communica-

tion. In *Leçons de choses*, for example, we see a shot of a man taking his dog for a walk (or a dog taking his man for a walk) which we are then told is 'two telephone calls'. The reason is that the man and the dog—or the dog and the man—are linked by the lead which travels in both directions! As well as constantly forcing us to revise our visual apprehension of the world, *Sur et sous la communication*, as the man and the dog also suggest, lays particular emphasis on what lies 'between', on the links which exist across a strongly marked binomial structure.

Avant et après comments on and interprets the structure of the series as a whole, which consists of 'Six fois deux' (Six times two) programmes, each approximately 50 minutes long, in which, at least theoretically, 'the first section examines a problem theoretically and conceptually and the second, in the form of an interview, holds some of the concerns of the first half in tension with the particular experience of an individual life' (MacCabe p. 141). In fact this principle of organisation is not altogether carried through and tends to break down towards the end of the sequence, where the relationship between the first and second sections appears to be more tenuous. However, one of the achievements of *Sur et sous la communication* is its apparent lack of formalism, normally so characteristic of Godard, and its apparent approximation to the supreme inconsequence of what passes on television, whereas *France/Tour/Détour* is a visible effort to structure television.

Avant et après suggests, in fact, that the programmes should be read across the horizontal axis (as proposed by MacCabe), which gives *Y a personne*, *Louison* // *Leçons de choses*, *Jean-Luc* // *Photos et cie*, *Marcel* // *Pas d'histoires*, *Nanas* // *Nous trois*, *René(s)* // *Avant et après*, *Jacqueline et Ludovic*, but also down the vertical axis which, notably, would allow all the so-called personal programmes to be juxtaposed (the intersection of axes, it should be noted, is a figure which is frequently inscribed on the screen throughout the series to explain or reinforce points). Alternatively, says *Avant et après*, one might think of the first sections as the programmes of the day, and the second sections as those of the night (day follows night as night follows day), as inevitable as the sequence of day and night and as long as the six days of the creation!

Is *Sur et sous la communication* merely an attempt to organise the everyday, to structure the banal? It is true that, with the exception of the programmes where he himself is interviewed (*Jean-Luc*), and the possible exception of *René(s)* (since René Thom is a famous mathematician), Godard has gone out of his way to invite the participation



'France/tour/detour': '... the most mysterious beginning, the birth of a child.' From episode eleven: 'an extraordinary zoom that moves from a conventional image of natural beauty to reveal the smoke-belching factory' (MacCabe).

of 'ordinary people'—for example, the charwoman and the metalworker whom he interviews in *Y a personne* were recruited through the small ads in a Grenoble newspaper. On the other hand, the programmes offering a clear attempt to give a voice to people who are odd or different and therefore usually excluded from television (cf. *Jacqueline et Ludovic*), or to examine categories of people ignored or ill-treated by society (the unemployed in *Y a personne*, the peasants in *Louison*, the retired and women in *Nanas*), these overtly political concerns must be set in relation to those programmes—*Leçons de choses*, *Marcel*, *Photos et cie*, *Pas d'histoires* and *Avant et après*—which offer a more consistently interpretative approach to the heterogeneity of the world and a reflection on the composition of sound and image.

Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics contains a particularly interesting discussion of *Marcel* and *Photos et cie* in the section on 'Technology' where many of the concerns of *Sur et sous la communication* are related to developments from the early days of 'direct cinema' through more recent films such as *Far from Vietnam* and *Pravda*. It is especially important that for many of the things Godard wished to do, notably 'complicate the relation between sound and image', video technology offered possibilities which are simply not available on film or, if they are, remain prohibitively expensive. *Sur et sous la communication*, like *Numéro deux*, makes particular use of the capacity to write directly on to the screen when video is being used, and this is an essential element in the richness of the series. But a slightly different emphasis is appropriate here if the relevance of the series to Godard's work in general, and especially to *Sauve qui peut*, is to be brought out.

Leçons de choses is one section which might be taken as exemplary of much of Godard's recent work. The title refers to the positivist 'object lesson', the technique employed here to make the evidence of our hearing contradict the evidence of our sight: 'this', we are told over a shot of a winding river, 'is a long story', and 'this', over a shot of a baby, 'is a civil war'. What occurs is, therefore, a characteristic fusion of the didactic and the artistic, the school exercise and the painting (or 'the pro-filmic event' and 'montage'): the work is a 'composition' as in school-composition according to *Avant et après*, or 'a film composed by Jean-Luc Godard' according to the credits of *Sauve qui peut*.

Godard's recent work is also closely concerned with the problems of sound in ways which are not often discussed: experiments with volume are, of course, characteristic of Godard and recur in *Sauve qui peut*. But *Lotte in Italia*, for example, interestingly disturbs the

balance between two tracks in different languages (French and Italian) in a way that is quite common on French television but rare (for cultural reasons) on British television. In *Introduction à une véritable histoire* Godard declares the ambition to use post-synchronisation in order to mix a number of voices to achieve the one he wants (and drily observes that most actors would refuse to lend themselves to such experiments), while at the Avignon Festival he explained that for *Sauve qui peut* he had attempted (and failed) to avoid sound mixing entirely and to record straight on to a single track. A much more systematic investigation of Godard's practices with sound would be extremely interesting, and *Leçons de choses*, with its emphasis on the contradictory possibilities of sound, might help to point the way.

Finally, *Leçons de choses* offers a crucial advance on the Manichean oppositions which have always seemed so central to Godard's cinema because, no doubt, fundamental to cinema itself: black and white, night and day, landscape and factory, before and after, stories about men, silence from women. *Sauve qui peut* has a poetic version: hair of ebony (*cheveux d'ébène*) and face of ivory (*face d'ivoire*) said, respectively, of Nathalie Baye and Roland Amstutz. But *Leçons de choses* makes clear, in a witty and economical image, that such oppositions are merely a question of point of view: children are seen behind a wire-netting fence in a school playground but 'for them they're in front of the fence' and 'what's important is between', the third element, the interface, the communication.

It is to be hoped that *Sauve qui peut* will achieve at least a limited commercial success. But all Godard's films, or all those since about 1965, are slow burners: they are so various, so crammed with detail, they start so many hares, they require so much attention from a number of our faculties simultaneously, that several viewings are always necessary before the bits and pieces even begin to fall into place. Two recent books, however, offer a wealth of interesting material for the viewer concerned to understand what Godard is now trying to do.

The first is *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma* (Albatros, 1980), which publishes the transcript of Godard's remarks in response to questions put to him on the occasion of a series of screenings at the Cinémathèque in Montreal, screenings which juxtaposed one of his own films with one or more others in some way related to it (eg., *A bout de souffle* and Preminger's *Fallen Angel*). This event took place at monthly intervals over a period in 1978, and the book is ostensibly the text which replaces the film that Godard would have liked to

make, and may still make, on the history of the cinema.

The second book, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* by Colin MacCabe with Laura Mulvey and Mick Eaton, is an excellent introduction and handbook to the post-1968 Godard, the least known but perhaps most significant and interesting period of his career. In what is a relatively short space it offers the fruit of considerable research, a wealth of factual information and the record of a series of interviews with Godard in which MacCabe asked him to comment on the material of the various chapters (these, like all interviews with Godard, are intermittently interesting).

Such compression has the effect of bringing out more strongly the need for work of greater length on the whole of Godard's oeuvre and, in particular, the need for a more detailed study of his television work, since what is proposed here is, as MacCabe himself says, extremely incomplete. Compression also has one other slightly unfortunate result in the chapter entitled 'Money and montage', which is intended partly as an investigation of a cryptic phrase in the script of Godard's forthcoming film *The Story*—'Let the money flow faster than the images'—and partly an account of the themes of criminal and legal money as explored in Godard's earlier films. This chapter is also about the relation between money and the image, which according to MacCabe is a question of the congruence and incongruence of looks. The only objection to this, in a book which is otherwise so lucid and so concerned to fill in the intellectual and political background to many of Godard's films, is that the ideas put forward here do presuppose some knowledge of MacCabe's own earlier work, and especially his articles on *Klute* and *Tout va bien* in *Screen*.

Otherwise, the central sections on 'Politics', 'Images of women' and 'Technology' explore what must be recognised as the three central concerns of Godard's films, the chapter on 'Politics' being especially valuable since the author has actually seen the 'invisible' films produced in the late 1960s and early 70s and is able to use them to show how, throughout Godard's work, the crucial preoccupation has been the 'politics of the image', the fact that 'politics is a question of signification'. This is a splendid start to the BFI's new publications series and a well-timed complement to *Sauve qui peut*: the two together may help to give Godard a much needed thrust back into the forefront of our preoccupations. ■

Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics, by Colin MacCabe with Laura Mulvey and Mick Eaton. Macmillan/BFI, £12.00, £4.95.

Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma, by Jean-Luc Godard. Albatros, Paris.

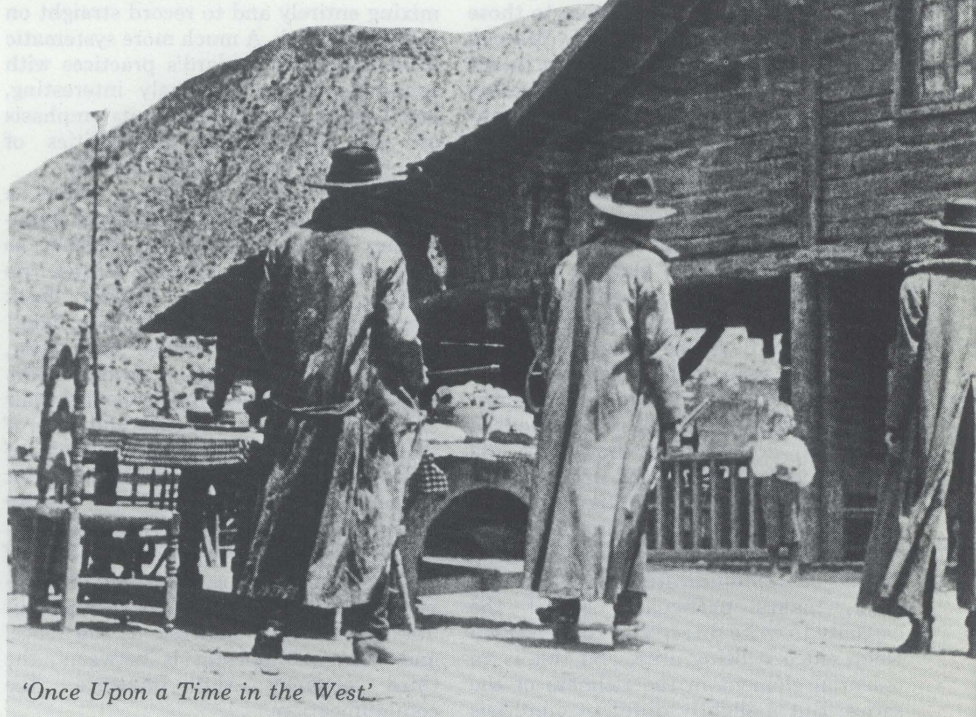
David Nicholls writes about the work of Sergio Leone, whose Westerns were 'Americanised European movies for ... the children of Marx and Coca-Cola'.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN ITALY

The Italian Western, now gone the way of the same country's epics, never quite achieved critical respectability. There are many possible reasons for this comparative neglect. With a few honourable exceptions, writers on the cinema found this bastard sub-genre too much to take. Perhaps the violence and the cynicism put them off; or the downgrading of dialogue (usually atrociously dubbed or just plain atrocious) in favour of an operatic combination of music and short sharp bursts of action made writing about the films difficult; or perhaps they were just seen as cheap rip-offs of the pure American product, made (as if American films were not) for wholly commercial reasons, exploiting the baser instincts of a popular audience craving for sadistic gratification. They were more properly a cause for concern than for critical attention, the lurid debasement of one of the cinema's great genres with distinctly unhealthy consequences.

Many if not most of them fully deserve oblivion, but those of Sergio Leone, who both established the style and took it to its farthest limits in the films he made between *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) and *A Fistful of Dynamite* (1971), merit special notice. For if Leone initially set out to exploit a popular form in order to grab a fistful of lire, as he had done earlier with epics, his true understanding of that form, combined with his tongue-in-cheek cynicism and the bigger budgets engendered by enormous international success, led him and his collaborators to change permanently the look of the Western and to revitalise its subject matter.

Even critics who look down their noses at the Italian product cannot help but praise American films which would never have been made without it. True, some of the American movies were as bad as the worst from Italy, but in general the Western was revived by a hefty helping of spaghetti: *The Wild Bunch*, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, *High Plains Drifter*, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, *Ulzana's Raid*, *Two Mules for Sister*



'Once Upon a Time in the West'

Sara, *Chato's Land* and others are there to prove it.

Leone's success was built on his obvious knowledge of earlier films. Some of *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968) was shot in Monument Valley, and the film's dust-coated heavies were the direct descendants of numerous earlier bad men, most directly perhaps of the Cleggs in *Wagonmaster*. Leone's true crime lay not in ignorance of Western forms and themes but in knocking the Western hero off his pedestal and seemingly undermining the moral foundations of the genre: everyone in his Westerns not only looks like a bad guy, but generally behaves like one as well. The sight of Clint Eastwood—unshaven, cheroot-chewing, poncho clad, riding a mule—at the opening of *A Fistful of Dollars* was shocking because we realised that he was supposed to be the hero. And once we had got used to that, Leone showed us Henry Fonda, of all people, as the sadistic Frank, coolly and delightedly gunning down a small boy after a carefully orchestrated build-up in the second section of *Once Upon a Time in the West*.

A major change of bearings as to who was supposed to be good, bad and ugly was imposed. At the same time the Vietnam war and the social and cultural explosion of the late 60s made such subversion of American morality and mythology into a profitable venture for Hollywood. The subsequent state of creative anarchy produced a mixed bag of films, including Westerns which reversed the traditional values of the genre under heavy Italian influence. But Leone's own success allowed him to keep his distance from the more simplistic manifestations of the Woodstock generation. After making the cynical political fable *A Fistful of Dynamite*, he happily got out of film directing as the inevitable reaction set in and the audience retired hurt under a barrage of clichés.

The particular 'look' and abstract quality of Leone's first Western was probably imposed by circumstances. The idea of turning Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* into a Western was hardly revolutionary, as a similar process had produced *The Magnificent Seven*, but Leone used limited resources



to make a film which was both close to its inspiration and strikingly original, producing a European revolution within the Western.

The world presented by the tale of a mysterious stranger sorting out a family feud amidst a welter of falling bodies is one of greed, treachery, vengeance and hatred, without law or agreed moral conventions, in which the 'hero' is motivated purely by desire for money and defies cinematic normality by undergoing no conversion to goodness. His victims are no better and deserve all they get, while good people are weak and only survive with the aid of the unscrupulous. Western rituals are reduced to brutal basics, but the violence is realistic enough and painful. The beating-up inflicted on Clint Eastwood is a world away from the cheerful fist fights of Ford or Hawks, and his 'resurrection' and subsequent invulnerability is achieved with a crudely manufactured bulletproof vest. His mythic quality is gained by trickery and he displays no magnanimity.

Eastwood himself later turned his character into a supernatural phenom-

enon in *High Plains Drifter*. This was in a sense logical and produced a fine film, turning conventions about the virtues of the frontier community completely upside down; but Leone always tempered the iconographic quality of his strangers with wry materialism. Charles Bronson in *Once Upon a Time in the West* is similarly saved from a bullet in the heart by his harmonica.

The fact remains that the world of *A Fistful of Dollars*, for all its viciousness, is unreal: a sun-drenched desert outside time and place. As Leone's budgets got bigger, several things happened: characters motivated by something other than money appeared; an obsessive concern with time and memory grew to great importance; and American and Mexican history fused with the timeless world, producing a thoroughly subversive view. The long, rambling tale of the three protagonists of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), a blackly humorous story of double and triple cross, winds its way through the American Civil War, minutely reconstructed with great historical care. But the Civil War centrepiece

of the film—the battle for the bridge—is an archetypally useless conflict. The young Confederate officer and a host of extras die for no purpose, while the villainous Angel Eyes masquerades as a Union officer and, thus disguised, employs the utmost brutality in furthering his search for the gold which is the McGuffin from which the action springs.

The theme of vendetta over a long time had been introduced in *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), with Mortimer (Lee Van Cleef) pursuing the psychopathic Indio (Gian Maria Volonté), who had raped his sister and driven her to suicide. Mortimer's revenge provides the basis of the action, with the music of Indio's watch acting as a motif, but he remains a bounty hunter racing Eastwood to get the reward for killing Indio. Later, Leone pulled all his strings together in *Once Upon a Time in the West*. Here Harmonica's revenge on Frank becomes enmeshed with a startlingly original version of the 'progress of civilisation into the frontier' theme of numerous Westerns.

The Charles Bronson character is for most of the film the most mysterious of all Leone's strangers. He is clearly no mere bounty hunter. An anonymous drifter, he uses his harmonica, which provides him with his only name, to announce his presence. As Cheyenne (Jason Robards) remarks, when we hear those strange ethereal notes we know something is about to happen, with unpleasant consequences for someone. His secret, which we may guess is connected with Frank and with the harmonica, is only revealed as he kills Frank. The series of fuzzy flashbacks are resolved into a surrealistic landscape, with the young future avenger forced by Frank to balance his brother on his shoulders under a scaffold formed by the arch of a ruined building until eventually he collapses with exhaustion, causing his brother to be hanged. The wheel comes full circle as Bronson forces the harmonica into the dying Frank's mouth, just as the smiling Frank had shoved it into his mouth years before.

The harmonica, like the watch in *For a Few Dollars More*, acts as a reminder of the past, links past and present, and represents Frank's nemesis, his past literally catching up with him. He is at first bewildered, with Harmonica appearing as an invulnerable ghost, wrecking his current schemes but preserving him to be dealt with in the proper manner and all in good time. When the railroad magnate Morton pays Frank's men to kill their leader, Harmonica saves his life. In a rather clumsy piece of symbolism, one of the ambushers is even hidden behind a clock face: Harmonica tells Frank to look at the time and Frank kills the ambusher.

Frank's time will be when Harmonica wills it. His end comes in a typically protracted gunfight, with Leone's direction and Ennio Morricone's music providing a suitably ritualistic and fatalistic staging. In this subtly deformed version of the code of the West the two men have to go through their final confrontation, and Frank remembers the reason for it only at the moment of his dying. Harmonica's revenge is satisfied and he

has nothing left to achieve. With no place in the new world symbolised by the railroad, all he can do is ride away, like Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers* and a host of lesser heroes.

But Harmonica is not the only character whose time has come. Cheyenne and Frank are also out of place, and both are doomed. (The British distributors for some reason cut some twenty minutes from the film, including the death of Cheyenne. Most of the cuts are of no great importance, but to leave one of the main characters behaving as if suffering from indigestion—he has been shot in the stomach, but we don't know it—and then denying both him and the film their proper endings indicates contempt for both film-maker and audience.)

Cheyenne represents the good outlaw. Framed for the murder of the McBains, he is throughout on the side of the angels, although Jason Robards' shrewd performance suggests an undertow of ruthlessness beneath the rather avuncular exterior. With a price on his head, fatalistic, and resigned to being out of time, he is shot by Morton: 'Mr Choo Choo,' as he says, 'who leaves two shiny tracks, like a snail.' He hides his injury from Jill (Claudia Cardinale) and rides off with Harmonica after the latter has shot Frank. Now, out of sight of the new world around the railroad, he asks to die alone with dignity. Harmonica allows him to fade away with integrity intact.

Although Leone's operatic style always lends a grandiose dimension to the deaths of his protagonists, the romanticism of Cheyenne's whole character is unique in his work; and, conversely, his death is uniquely quiet and noble. It is perhaps too tempting to see the influence of co-scriptwriter Bernardo Bertolucci at work throughout *Once Upon a Time*, but there are various aspects of the film setting it apart from Leone's other Westerns. Certainly, the gallant, doomed outlaw rejected by a corrupt society, despite being a familiar Western figure, seems more in tune with Bertolucci's sensibility than with Leone's.

Frank, on the other hand, steps right out of earlier Leone films, although Bertolucci would perhaps see him as a prototype fascist, similar to Attila in *1900*. But, despite his complete nastiness, he is just as much the doomed outlaw as is the pleasanter Cheyenne (and probably more like the real historical thing). He is employed by Morton and in his arrogance believes that he is the dominant partner, but in reality he is being used by the railroad man, and his attempt to as it were ride the railway for his own profit cannot succeed. Morton uses his money to turn Frank's men against him, and he only escapes from this through Harmonica. Either the future or the past will get rid of him. In the end he knows he must face his past and that it will probably kill him.

The good and bad outlaws both have to disappear in the new world. The theme of 'civilisation' coming from the east and taking over the frontier is of course familiar from countless Westerns, but the treatment in *Once Upon a Time*, where the hand of Bertolucci is again discernible, is strikingly different. Morton the



Left: Jack Elam in 'Once Upon a Time in the West'. Right: Sergio Leone. Below: Henry Fonda in 'Once Upon a Time'; Clint Eastwood and Eli Wallach in 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'; Rod Steiger in 'A Fistful of Dynamite'.

physically and spiritually corrupt capitalist pursues his dream across the West, murdering families that get in his way, employing thugs like Frank, and bringing with him an exploited, multi-racial, mostly Chinese workforce. He is a familiar type from Italian political cinema, his physical debility symbolising the corruption of a system which gets its way through the power of hard cash. Frank can delight in humiliating Morton physically, but in the end money is as powerful as brute force. The railroad progresses by using both unscrupulously.

Morton himself is killed, but the progress of the new world is unstoppable. Only one of the main characters adapts successfully. Claudia Cardinale's Jill changes herself from the best whore in New Orleans into a practical businesswoman and mother-figure for the railroad workers. This is a major departure from the earlier films in which women, apart from the ferocious matriarch in *A Fistful of Dollars*, are merely victims of male brutality. Jill's future as Mrs McBain is destroyed by Frank and Morton, but she determines to make a go of a new life by guts and determination. She is even prepared to sell her body again to Frank in order to help herself.

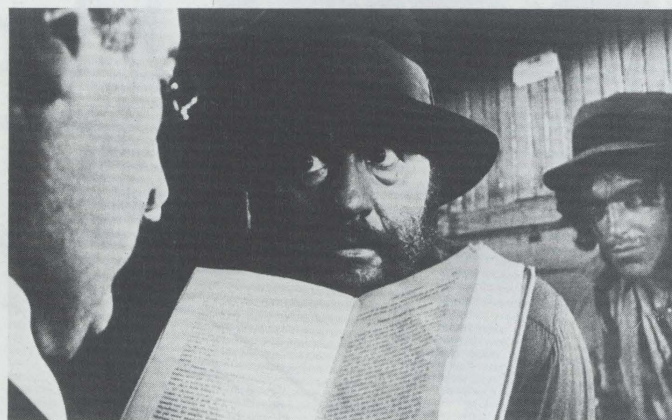
This is no Godardian view of capitalism as a giant brothel (or Paul Schrader's similar view of contemporary America); it is rather a jungle in which every man and woman must fight for themselves. It is a world which abolishes the past. Morton is spurred on by a dream of the future, while Harmonica, Cheyenne and Frank are all trapped in the past and must make way. Only Jill succeeds in abolishing her own past and winning her own small victory over the present. She is at the centre of the film because she is the only character capable of change,

even if she needs the help of Harmonica and Cheyenne to achieve it.

It is again tempting to see *Once Upon a Time* as the outcome of the meeting of Leone's cynicism and Bertolucci's Marxism. In its style and its ambitions it pushed the Italian Western as far as it could go. The full version is certainly one of the most remarkable films of its time—a materialist fairy tale which, where given the chance, struck a chord at the box-office. Leone's style, evolved in the earlier films, expanded its spare outlines to grandiose but appropriate proportions. The film becomes an epic without pretensions to historical precision (hence the title) but to being an emblematic tale, comparable with Italian political movies like *Quemada*, and also in a sense the ultimate Western.

Most major Western themes are there, but, through Leone's artificial, operatic style, the film becomes a view from Europe, based on American historical mythology but presenting it precisely as an alien mythology. The traditional function of the Western is undercut and its iconography used to say, in effect, that it does not wash any more: that life in the West, past and present, is nasty, brutish and short; 'heroes' and villains pursue money; and nobility comes only through preserving personal dignity, avenging evil, and turning one's back on the world created by corrupt and crazy money-makers.

Women may survive by guile and, as Godard put it in *Vivre sa Vie*, by selling their bodies while keeping their souls. Men may retreat into a sort of drop-out machismo which, as the film's popularity with European youth showed, tuned in neatly with the culture of the hippy outsider. *Once Upon a Time in the West*



is quite as indicative of the culture of the late 60s as are many more critically renowned films. Leone's Westerns were Americanised European movies for an Americanised but anti-American audience, and found immense popularity with the children of Marx and Coca-Cola, including those of us who loved John Wayne but detested his politics.

Leone, of course, was concerned with the box-office; and, in France at least, the nicety of his instinct was proved when *Once Upon a Time* spawned a Parisian fashion for raincoats like the film's dustcoats and a 'Leone look' became terribly chic. There was, however, now nowhere for the Leone Western to go. He followed *Once Upon a Time* with *A Fistful of Dynamite*, the politics of which, incidentally, provides a powerful argument for Bertolucci's influence on the earlier film.

Leone's underrated last film as director is his most directly political, moving back to the historical reconstruction of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, but with a plot much more integrated into history and by implication contemporary political attitudes. Rod Steiger clearly enjoys himself as Juan quite as much as Eli Wallach had done in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, but in his case the wily bandit ends up as a heroic, even tragic figure. His sole concern is that he and his family should survive through the chaos of the Mexican revolution. He becomes despite himself a Hobsbawm-type social bandit and revolutionary hero, but his family are murdered and he ends up alone.

The enormous piling-up of bodies in *A Fistful of Dynamite*, which is no distortion of events in Mexico between 1911 and 1913, reiterates what was already implicit in *The Good, the Bad and the*

Ugly: that history and real life are far nastier than the never-never land of the other films. Peasants like Juan are the chief victims, with nothing to hope for from professional revolutionaries like James Coburn's Sean and his friends or from middle-class reformists like Madero, who are either well-meaning but ineffectual or else hypocrites using the peasant masses to get to the top of the political heap.

In contemporary terms the film may be seen as a sideways comment on Western revolutionaries and their enthusiasm for Third World rebellion. Sean, the IRA explosives expert on the run, can trick Juan into freeing political prisoners when he thinks he is robbing a bank, but the power of political corruption and prolonged contact with his less than totally enthusiastic protégé, who is sceptical about his high-minded talk, confirms Sean as a universal outsider. He throws away his copy of Bakunin and then goes out with a bang and a grand gesture in the attack on the train. He is a strong, charismatic, intransigent figure, but not far removed from the traditional Hollywood view, as shown in, for example, *Viva Zapata*, of the revolutionary as an idealistic misfit who can only preserve his integrity in death. But Leone combines Hollywood romanticism with his own European black humour: at times laughter is the only defence against the unpleasant way of the world. The irony which runs throughout his films is at its cruellest in *A Fistful of Dynamite*.

Sean's Irish revolutionism runs aground on the rocks of *peon* reality. Juan hates the greed and venality of the rich who run the world, but only wants to preserve himself and his family as best he can through banditry. He is not interested in becoming a revolutionary

leader—the role is bestowed on him by a western intellectual *engagé* and a hypocritical indigenous bourgeoisie. Like Mother Courage, with whom he has much in common, he fails to keep his family, but his activism is shown as preferable to the quietist piety of his priest brother. (Italian Westerns were always anti-clerical when not downright blasphemous.) Leone's Juan is a sympathetic and realistic character. Peasant 'conservatism' has caused great annoyance to left-wingers unwilling to make an effort towards understanding, with sometimes tragic results. But, as John Berger has pointed out, peasant culture is essentially a culture of survival, inviting incomprehension and a snobbish contempt from both right and left. Leone has, either instinctively or for the wrong reasons, hit on an important aspect of rebellious banditry.

It is, however, an incomplete picture, designed above all to chime in with Leone's wry and pessimistic outlook and to send up contemporary revolutionism. It could be said, of course, that someone so cynical must be a romantic at heart. But Leone's romanticism was totally sublimated into cinematic style. The usual term, 'operatic', is indeed absolutely right for describing his florid, over-the-top direction, with protracted set-pieces resembling rubber bands stretched to breaking point and then released in a sharp burst of violence.

The emblematic, almost mythic, quality this style gives his characters and plots is integrated brilliantly with the usually base nature of what is actually going on. Legends are debunked but somehow remain legends. Sean and Juan are both the stuff of which myths are made, despite their recognisable humanity. Leone re-created Western myths for an era when the country that originally created them was attempting to bomb and napalm a peasant country back into the stone age, and he did it with such style and commercial opportunism that some found it hard to take.

'And me,' asks Juan at the end of *A Fistful of Dynamite*, 'what do I do now?' And Leone? He got out of film directing and into production. Logically, the only films he could have made would have been vast historical epics beyond the financial means of the modern industry. He had, however, made his fistful of dollars. The days of the spaghetti Western were numbered, as nothing could top *Once Upon a Time in the West*.

As reaction set in to the irreverence of the late 60s, the commercial screen was dominated by reactionary and one-dimensional disaster movies. The reassuringly thorough professional replaced the mysterious stranger and outsider as the hero of the hour, with only a select few, including Clint Eastwood, whom Leone had made into a star, keeping the banner of originality flying. But Leone's disappearance from the screen cannot obscure his achievement. By unerring instinct for box-office potential and a brilliant choice of collaborators—Eastwood, Van Cleef, Volonté, Bertolucci, Morricone etc.—he made a unique contribution to European and world cinema which should not go unrecognised. ■

Biographical

Alexandre ('Sacha') Guitry was born in 1885 at No. 12 Nevsky Prospekt, St Petersburg. His father, Lucien Guitry, was the most fêted French actor of his day, Armand Duval to Bernhardt's Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias* and soon to create the eponymous cock of Rostand's *Chantecler*; Sacha's birth in Russia resulted from Lucien's having signed a contract with the Mikhailovsky Theatre for nine consecutive winter seasons. His mother, née de Pont-Jest, was a much-loved if somewhat shadowy figure in his life, already divorced from his father in 1890. As Sacha subsequently commented: 'I had two parents and adored them both—but separately.' Along with his father's slightly corpulent features and *matinée* idol poise, Sacha was heir to his wit. Accosted by an importunate journalist whose self-righteous justification for his boorishness was that 'I speak as I think,' Lucien instantly retorted: 'Yes—but more often.'

After his parents' divorce, Sacha was brought up in Lucien's sumptuous apartment, which managed to boast *two* of the best addresses in Paris, being situated astride the Place Vendôme and the Rue de la Paix. There, for example, he was allowed to sit in on Rostand's preliminary reading of *L'Aiglon*; and his childhood companions seem to have been limited to the Algonquinish set of cronies whom his father frequented: the boulevardier Alfred Capus ('Since I got married I've never set foot inside another woman'), the misanthropic Jules Renard ('It's not enough to be happy. We need to know at the same time that others aren't') and the perennially good-natured Tristan Bernard ('I wage a valiant battle with laziness, but when I've conquered it I'm so tired, so very tired, that I no longer have the courage to work'). Another friend was the humorist Alphonse Allais, who might be described as the French Stephen Leacock—and then some. Sacha recalled Allais once paying an impromptu visit to a diminutive provincial railway station and complimenting the station-master: 'I congratulate you. You have a charming station here, charming. But it's not in a very good position. Now, if you had it in Paris you'd make a mint of money.'

In this atmosphere Sacha's own gravitation towards the theatre became inevitable; and after a couple of false starts, he contrived to scribble an estimable three-act comedy, *Nono*, within almost as few days. Its successful première in 1905 launched him overnight on his career as the Lope de Vega of the Boulevard, of whose 126 plays only the merest handful would flop. Although such titles as *Le Kutz*, *Tell père*, *Tell fils*, *Mozart* (with a score by Reynaldo Hahn!), *Charles Lindbergh* (bizarrely subtitled 'a fantasy'), *Frans Hals*, *La S.A.D.M.P.* and *You're Telling Me!* intrigue rather than entice, it's possible that the best of his work was dismissed with even greater facility than it was written. A play like



Sacha

an introduction to Guitry • Gilbert Adair

Faisons un rêve (filmed in 1936) is as perfect a confection as, say, *Private Lives*, as airy and insubstantial as a bubble, no doubt, but a lovingly chiselled one. When in his seventh comedy, *Chez les Zoques*, the star fell ill, Sacha stepped in and proved to be his own definitive interpreter. Henceforth what he would write was not so much plays as leading roles with plays attached, even setting them, to make himself feel more at home, amid furnishings brought from his *hôtel particulier*, 18 Avenue Elisée-Reclus. A legend not simply in his lifetime but in his youth, already by his early thirties addressed as 'Maître', Sacha was soon able, as it were, to buy out his father's share in the name 'Guitry'.

His private life, though no less glittering, was certainly less uniformly enviable. He suffered from chronic hypochondria, complaining frequently of being undertreated ('Morphine was invented to give our doctors a good night's sleep'). He was married five times, twice to actresses:

Charlotte Lysès, who taught him the rudiments of his métier only to be overtaken by his success, and Yvonne Prinemps, who notoriously cuckolded him with Pierre Fresnay; then to three unknowns whom he determined, willy-nilly, to turn into actresses: Jacqueline Delubac ('I am 50 today. Jacqueline is 25. What could be more reasonable than that I make her my better half?'), Geneviève de Sérerville ('I see I'm going to be alone again ... and I begin to wonder who with') and Lana Marconi ('You're different. The others were only my wives. You will be my widow'). And there was, above all, the fact that in 1944 Guitry spent 60 days in prison for collaboration with the enemy, a charge of which no formal proof was ever established. To the end of his life he couldn't bring himself to forgive the indignities he had borne at the hands of his captors; and more scorching out went on in his address book than there had ever been in his manuscripts.

It's a delicate task, after so many years, attempting to distinguish substance from



Left: Guitry at Versailles ('*Si Versailles m'était conté*', 1953). Above: with Jacqueline Delubac in '*Faisons un rêve*' (1936); '*Le Comédien*' (1947); Michel Simon in '*La Poisson*' (1950). Below: theatre and life. '*Remontons les Champs-Élysées*'



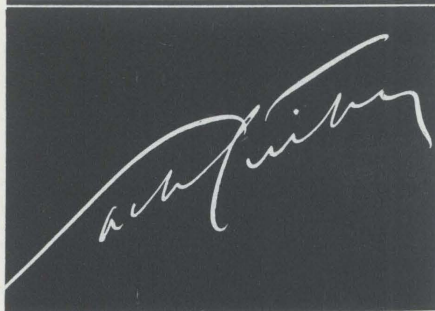
speculation. To be sure, no fewer than six of Guitry's fluffiest comedies were premièred during the Occupation in theatres whose best seats were ... occupied by high-ranking German officers; and, while many of his compatriots endured extreme privations, he himself saw no reason why circumstances should alter the princely habits of a lifetime. But his apologists (including his English biographer, James Harding, to whom I am indebted for much information contained in this article) have tirelessly endorsed Guitry's own twofold rationalisation of his conduct: that if he dined out with Nazis, it was the more effectively to aid friends in danger; and if he sanctioned performances of his work, it was to prevent French culture from being totally snuffed out. Maybe so. What is certain is that Guitry's stance towards the invader was rarely one of servility. Consider the case of Hitler's pet sculptor, Arno Breker: in the preface to an exhibition at the Grand Palais, Cocteau (who flattered himself on knowing just 'how

far to go too far') went much too far too far by formulating a desire to see Breker's bronze Aryan athletes stride in droves up the Champs-Élysées; whereas, at the *vernissage*, Guitry was heard publicly to remark that if all the sculptures were in erection, no one would be able to move around.

After his rehabilitation, Guitry remained something of an Elysian recluse, writing 'only' eight plays and directing 'only' twelve films; the most prestigious (though not critically) from among the latter proved to be his three historical extravaganzas, *Si Versailles m'était conté* (1953), *Napoléon* (whom he idolised no less than Gance, 1954) and *Si Paris nous était conté* (1955). When he died in 1957, the last Mme Guitry immediately arranged for the *hôtel particulier*, which he had long hoped would be accorded museum status, to be razed to the ground, its accumulated treasures sold off by auction. In its place, there stands today an anonymous and not even particularly lofty skyscraper.

Hagiographical

The often violent polemic provoked by Guitry's perverse defence of *théâtre filmé* has tended to obscure the fact that his first film, *Ceux de chez nous*, was shot in 1914-15 and was silent. (The commentary, which he had originally spoken in person, matching it impeccably to his own lip movements and thereby inventing post-synchronisation, was recorded on to the film in 1939; in 1952 footage was added of Guitry reading his text and rather complacently showing off the artworks in his collection.) *Ceux de chez nous*, a filmed 'introduction' to twelve national luminaries of the period—Bernhardt, France (Anatole), Degas, Rodin, Saint-Saëns, Renoir (Auguste), Henri-Robert (a celebrated barrister), Rostand, the theatrical innovator Antoine, Monet, Mirbeau and



Guitry (Lucien)—engaged, or pretending to be engaged, in furtherance of their respective arts, was not only a uniquely fascinating precursor of Clouzot's *Le Mystère Picasso* but also, perhaps, the first of the cinema's interrogations into the nature of its own specificity. Two decades after cinema entered the twentieth century by the train to La Ciotat (as filmed by Lumière)—when it would eclipse all rival modes of representing 'reality'—here was Guitry blithely recording the ebbing tide of 'pre-cinema' France, of which it was not yet true to say that, paraphrasing Mallarmé's Symbolist dictum, 'tout existe pour finir dans un film'.

Already a few classic cinematic parameters were innocently subverted by the behavioural eccentricities of his subjects. Rodin, for example, comically uncertain of the difference between still and movie photography, requested Guitry to 'tell me to stop when you're ready so that I shan't move.' Mirbeau, too, adopted a static pose as churlishly as for a bothersome press photographer; and Anatole France could hardly refrain from giggling at the absurdity of playing the man of letters for the exclusive benefit of an outlandish contraption. Alternatively, Guitry seemed to anticipate certain documentary and narrative techniques that would become important to the medium he professed to despise. Degas, flatly refusing to be filmed, had to be ambushed unawares, almost candid camera style, as he emerged from his apartment in the Boulevard de Clichy, the archetypal little bourgeois with his neat black brolly; while, in a sequence that vaguely prefigured Kuleshov's famous experiment in perception, Maître Robert was seen pleading a cause with such mute eloquence that numerous spectators were lastingly persuaded of his client's innocence. In fact, it was a mock trial, shot with considerable panache in the advocate's home, his cook's account-book serving as the scratch pad which he would learnedly consult between bouts of oratorical *élan*. So, in his modest way, Guitry was preserving a system of gestural rhetoric more proper to the nineteenth century, as well as a choice of evocative accessories that mainstream cinema, ever avid for the up-to-date, has either excluded from its field of vision or laboriously (and too often decoratively) reconstructed for the dubious purposes of nostalgia: Anatole France's monkish library, Rostand's prim, razor-sharp wing collar.

But even in relation to Guitry's filmography, *Ceux de chez nous* is far less marginal than may immediately be apparent, except that the commemorat-

ive value of its moving snapshots goes some way to validating an unattractive characteristic of his historical spectacles: the reduction of a period to its élite. For Guitry, who had the theatrical's tendency to equate 'the people' with 'the public', was equally and on occasion debilitatingly insensitive to the paradox that posterity habitually judges an age by those who were considered *ahead of it*. How else to explain his preference for the academicien Saint-Saëns over Debussy or Ravel, or for Rostand and Anatole France over Apollinaire and Proust? If Monet, Degas and Rodin were great artists by any standard, so too were (and already, if not universally, recognised as such) the painters of the Bateau-Lavoir in Montmartre. But whatever the rationale behind his selection—whether, for example, he conjectured that the younger men would one day be filmed at the height of *their* careers—the fact remains that he has bequeathed us an invaluable and well-nigh unique record of a few of the Belle Epoque's declining glories.

Polemical

In 1912 Guitry prophesied drily: 'I believe the cinema to be already past its peak.' As a dramatist, for whom the text, *his* text, reigned supreme, he was predictably deaf to the charms of silent film—predictably, but with an acrimony that is hard to square with a love of painting that caused him to disburse several fortunes in the pursuit of minor Impressionist masterpieces. *Ceux de chez nous* apart (and it must be remembered that in 1914 he conceived it as a propaganda film, merely exploiting the seventh art to extol the other six), Guitry's standpoint was the reverse of Chaplin's. It was the very 'universality' of the silents that he most feared and distrusted. If the advent of sound chipped away at the pedantic rigour of this bias, it scarcely lessened his animosity; but he did welcome it (as did Pagnol) as an unhelped-for means of extending the Boulevard into the provinces and thereby vastly augmenting his audience. Indeed, he saw the mechanical reproduction of pre-existent theatrical texts as the primary task of *all* cinema. Though a devoted admirer of Chaplin, for example, he held that *The Gold Rush*, *City Lights*, etc., were unworthy vehicles for his genius and actually regretted that there had existed no American Feydeau or Courteline to write three-act farces for him!

These *propos*, obsessively reiterated in a posthumously published collection of Guitry's writings on film—*Le Cinéma et moi*, edited by André Bernard and Claude Gautier—though often wittily put, make for such tiresome reading that, however reluctantly, one is forced to side with the legion of obscure journalists (plus Marcel L'Herbier) who over the years crossed swords with him. Basically, the articles of his faith can be resumed thus:

1. 'An actor on the screen does not act—he has *already* acted.' (What Guitry

adored in the theatre was precisely its potential for imperfection and re-interpretation.)

2. 'When the cinema enables us to observe the labour of an insect, the Niagara Falls, the birth of a bird, the flight of an aeroplane, a boxing match, in short, whenever it reproduces *life*, it affords us a pleasure that is both unique and instructive. But when all it offers is *Ruy Blas* in 21 tableaux, *Galino Chapelier* or else *Les Angoisses d'une mère*, it cheats the public and discredits itself.'

3. 'Cinema is not Latin—it is American.'

In Guitry's defence is the fact that his frame of reference was so narrow. Like many of the French intelligentsia of the *entre-deux-guerres*, exposed to only domestic and American films, he was ignorant of the German, Scandinavian and Soviet schools, nor could he envisage a French cinema that was not one of *adaptation*, whether from Hugo or contemporary farces and melodramas. But equally, and crucially, in his defence is the fact that, filming his stage hits with a disregard for the codified 'opening out' process that verged on provocation, or writing and directing original scripts in which the hoariest clichés of the Boulevard remained piously intact (a charismatic, usually dressing-gowned central character, a drawing-room set that would lend itself to flamboyant entrances and exits, a series of ingenious variations on the Husband, the Wife and the Lover—rarely has this triangle seemed more literally 'eternal' than in Guitry's theatre), he produced a body of work not only as 'civilised' as Lubitsch's but one for which a number of plausible claims of 'modernity' have been made. (In an irony unlikely to be appreciated by Guitry's ghost, he will probably be remembered more for his films than his plays.)

Filmographical

To call Guitry 'the father of modern cinema', as one French critic rashly did, is to risk doing his cause an injustice. But, logically enough, his unconcealed contempt for the medium must have encouraged him to set about undermining its more inhibitive conventions as overtly (if frivolously, and always within a reactionary ideological framework) as certain radical film-makers of a later generation. *Item*: Long before *India Song*, his *Le Roman d'un tricheur* (1936), a suavely sardonic account of a confidence trickster's progress, had been narrated almost wholly in voice-off, Guitry's own inimitably nasal whinny 'dubbing' the dialogue of every single character on the screen, including those played by Jacqueline Delubac and Marguerite Moreno. (Truffaut has also detected this film's influence on the Welles of *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *F For Fake*, to which might be added his own *L'Homme qui aimait les femmes*; and, of lesser significance, the multiplicity of disguises donned by Guitry the actor predated the comparable versatility

of Guinness and Sellers.) *Item*: Before *Le Mépris*, his droll homage to the Entente Cordiale, *Les Perles de la couronne* (1937, co-directed with Christian-Jaque), had deployed a trilingual soundtrack (in French, English and Italian) with most of the film's quid pro quos deriving directly from linguistic misunderstandings and misinterpretations. *Item*: Before *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* (and the Gance of *Cyrano et d'Artagnan*), his medium-length squib, *Le Mot de Cambronne* (1936), had been spoken entirely in alexandrines. In it Guitry played the elderly General Cambronne, struggling in his retirement to live down the notoriety conferred on him by his 'word' ('merde', of course), whose identity he has never revealed to his family. But under relentless interrogation by his wife (Moreno), fielding at him one twelve-syllable question after another, all of which end inexorably in 'erde' (a difficult rhyme in French), he is driven to a pitch of distraction from which he is rescued only by the intervention of the maid (Delubac), who drops a tureen and inadvertently—but smack on the missing twelfth syllable of Cambronne's uncompleted answer—lets slip the fateful word.

One of Guitry's innovations has never been (nor will ever be) surpassed. For a gala evening in 1942 sponsored by the COIC (the Organisation Committee for the Cinematographic Industry), he cobbled together a short comedy, *La Loi du 21 juin 1907*, starring Arletty and Fernand Gravey. This dealt with a conventional amorous dilemma of which the law in question—relating to the rights of children to marry without their parents' consent—would prove to be the *deus ex machina*. Its extreme originality consisted in its setting up of a bilateral interplay between the auditorium and the film. As an usherette wandered down the aisle noisily selling ices, Arletty tartly snapped at her from the screen: 'Really, Madame, can't you see we've already begun!' When Gravey, having misplaced his watch, wonders what time it is, a member of the audience called out 'Nine o'clock', to be gracefully thanked from the screen; and, at the dénouement, when Gravey attempts without success to contact his lawyer, the latter (Fernand Ledoux) suddenly shouted 'Here I am!' from the auditorium, hurried down the aisle, 'entered' the screen to inform the unhappy couple of the famous law, then just as nonchalantly 'exited'.

But Guitry was not merely the cinema's Satie, as it were, whose whimsical divergences from the norm deserve our indulgence only in so far as they were to be more 'scientifically' developed by others (and, anyway, the notion that Duras, say, might have been directly influenced by his work is spectacularly risible). He can lay claim to being one of the first *auteurs complets*, directing, writing, acting in his films, and often furnishing their sets (as in the theatre) from his own home. At least two, *Mon Père avait raison* (1936) and *Le Comédien* (1947), were enriched by unmediated autobiographical elements. In the latter, Guitry was cast—almost typecast—as his own father; and the

former was based on a play in which he had once played the 'Son' to his father's 'Father'. Twenty years later, however, he appropriated the role of the 'Father' for himself, absent-mindedly remarking to his director of photography during the screening of some rushes: 'I adore the way you lit that scene between my father and Jacqueline.'

He was fond of surrounding his pertly pretty wives and his own floridly rotund person, dressed up to the nines (or Nineties) in spats, canes and gaudy Laval-lières, with a loyal repertory company: on the one hand, Pauline Carton, Jeanne Fusier-Gir and the two Marguerites, Moreno (subsequently Giraudoux's 'Folle de Chaillot') and the extraordinary Pierry, whose facial expressions managed to stay just this side of professional contortionism; on the other, a shuffling entourage of supporting actors—Aimos, Andrex, Sinoël, Craven—whose first and second names seemed to have merged into one as if to symbolise the equality of affection and respect in which they were held by the public. Guitry offered them all a delectable 'last hurrah' in the shape of *Ils étaient neuf célibataires* (1939), in which he played an amiable charlatan hiring out nine unmarried old codgers as husbands in name only to any rich foreign ladies who, in the wave of xenophobia that swept France just prior to the Second World War, risked having their residence permits revoked.

Though one is tempted to compare Guitry with Noël Coward (the dressing-gowns, the actorish urbanity, the sentimental jingoism underlying such *Cavalcade*-like spectacles as *Les Perles de la couronne* and *Remontons les Champs-Élysées*, 1939), and though the ironic stress placed on social hierarchies and 'good manners' links him with Lubitsch (e.g., the enchanting below-stairs comedy, *Désiré*, 1937, in which he played a Parisian Jeeves), his postwar work especially was shot through with a ferociously misanthropic strain reminiscent of Buñuel's Mexican period or the Chaplin of *Monsieur Verdoux*. It surfaces most farcically in a strange film, *Adhémar ou le jouet de la fatalité* (1950, directed by its star, Fernandel, when Guitry fell ill). The luckless fate of poor, unloved Adhémar is to be a creature totally devoid of humour while, at the same time, endowed with a set of goofily equine features that would be a clown's—and indeed were Fernandel's—fortune. For example, after he solicitously rushes to the aid of a pedestrian knocked down by a police horse, the victim, on recovering consciousness, insists to the policeman: 'But, officer, I'm certain I saw two horses...' Our hero finally seeks refuge in a château donated to the physically underprivileged by some malformed philanthropist, and his first lugubrious dinner-party with its inmates must rank as one of the most sheerly tasteless comic *trouvailles* in the history of the cinema. In another 1950 film, *La Poison* (meaning, with its feminine gender, not 'poison' but 'a virago'), a pitifully hen-pecked clerk (one of Michel Simon's most affecting performances) arrives in his lawyer's office to announce that he has

just murdered his wife. The lawyer, intrigued, meticulously proceeds to outline the plan of his defence—whereupon Simon returns home and only then, in accordance with the advice so generously proffered him, commits the crime.

If Guitry was a real original, however, it was less in the sense of doing something that had never been done before than in doing something so perfectly it could never be done again. And what one should speak of here, rather than 'filmed theatre', is perhaps 'theatricalised film'. To be sure, the least accomplished of his adaptations (*Toâ, Aux Deux Colombes*, little more than crude records of stage performances) bear only an academic relation to cinema proper. But in his best work, as in that of Pagnol or Cocteau's *Les Parents terribles*, an elegantly thrifty *mise en scène* coupled with Guitry's own incomparable vocal delivery does produce the desired suspension of disbelief, even if the 'life' we momentarily appear to be sharing in is that of the stage (which is, after all, by the very physicality of its live performers, 'closer to life' than the most seamlessly naturalistic of films).

So acutely do we identify with this theatrical 'realism' that when, Guitry having all but monopolised the first half of *Faisons un rêve*, there follows a brief scene in his absence between Jacqueline Delubac and Raimu, we have the distinct impression that it was inserted—in the film—for the sole purpose of permitting him to snatch a breather in his dressing-room. And the sound of technicians breaking for elevenses on an adjacent set, clearly audible on the soundtrack of *Assassins et voleurs* (1956, his last film—technically directed by Clément Duhour), impinges on our attention only as much as the occasional noises-off which we more or less take for granted in the theatre. People want from the theatre, Guitry said, 'the illusion that they are in the theatre'; only he also managed to indulge this illusion in the cinema.

As for his historical films, from the sarcastic hagiography of *Le Destin fabuleux de Désirée Clary* (whose spoken credits, delayed until fully halfway through the narrative, introduce a whole new set of actors who will incarnate the characters' older selves—but the ingenuity of Guitry's credit titles in general would require an article to itself) and *La Malibran* (a biopic of the diva with Cocteau as Alfred de Musset), made in 1941 and 1943 respectively, to the final spectacles, in which French history is reduced to a procession of pageant 'floats', they possess their own quaint charm. A single example, from *Si Paris nous était conté*, will have to suffice. Marat, in the classic David pose, sits soaping himself in his tub. There is a knock at his bathroom door. Without turning his head, he cries 'Entrez!' The door opens to reveal Charlotte Corday brandishing a huge knife. As she stealthily approaches the unsuspecting Marat, Guitry's voice is heard on the soundtrack: 'Il a dit "Entrez!" et elle est entrée...' (synchronised to the precise moment her knife slices his flesh) '... profondément!'



Jack Torrance applies for the job as caretaker at the Overlook Hotel high in the Colorado Rockies during the winter months. Jack is warned that a man can get very lonely up there. He laughs it off. He is also told, if not actually warned, of a murder by a previous winter caretaker, Mr Grady, who apparently went mad and killed his wife and daughters with an axe. Jack smiles and says that nothing like that will happen to him.

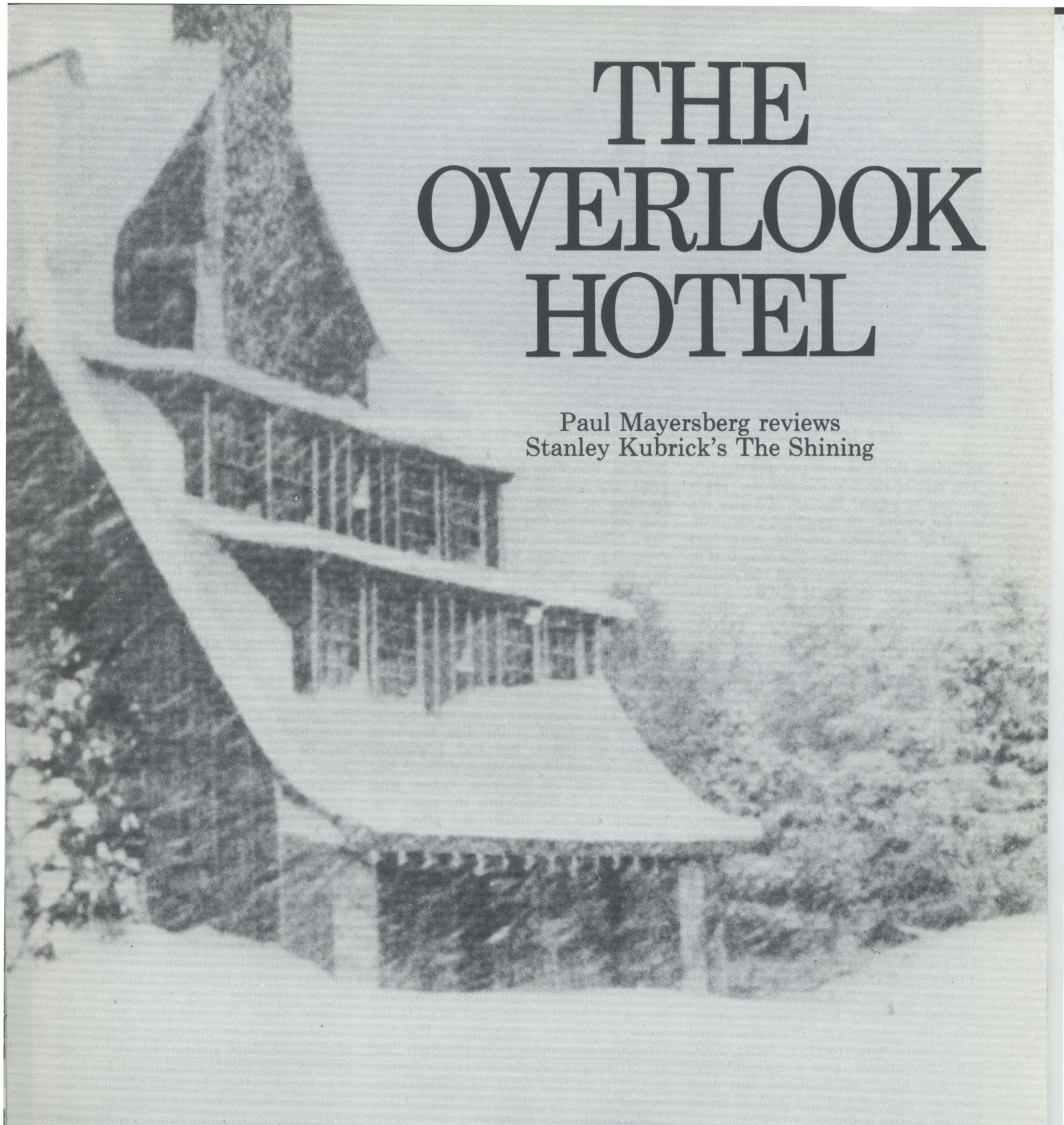
What follows when Jack brings his wife, Wendy, and his small son, Danny, to The Overlook, is not the unfolding of a narrative so much as a series of glimpses into the real and imagined lives

of Jack, Wendy and Danny. And also the lives of previous inhabitants of the hotel. A sequence of events suggests that Jack Torrance is going mad. But this is not quite true. Jack Torrance is crazy by the time he gets to the hotel. He is crazy for choosing the caretaker's job. Like an updated Henry James story, *The Shining* depicts a state of mind in which 'the story' is as much a figment of the character's imagination as it is of ours.

Events that seem to take place in the present may be re-enactments or simply memories of the past. To take *The Shining* at its face value is a mistake. It has no face, only masks, and it has no value, only implications. *The Shining* belongs

firmly in the tradition of *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Beast in the Jungle*. If the setting of the film had been an hotel in Yorkshire or a deserted winter retreat in Maine, the nature of the piece would be even more apparent.

The film opens with an extraordinary shot. An island, apparently in the middle of a lake or a river, seems to be moving towards us, floating on the surface, perhaps driven by an unseen machinery. It is an optical effect. In fact the lake is so still that the camera moving towards the island makes it look as if the island itself is moving. This unsettling image sets the tone of the film. The following sequence of aerial shots, tracking Jack's car up



THE OVERLOOK HOTEL

Paul Mayersberg reviews
Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*

into the snowy Rockies, is equally disorienting. At one point the camera sweeps away from the road, literally over the edge of the mountain. At precisely that moment the main title of the film appears, just when we are lost over the edge.

Over the edge, and over the top is Jack Nicholson's performance as Jack Torrance. But not really. Shelley Duvall's performance as Wendy Torrance, like Nicholson's, shows very little true development. This is not an oversight on the part of the director or actors. Jack and Wendy arrive at the Overlook Hotel with their personalities fully formed. They are like two characters picked off park

benches. One look at them and you know they're nuts. Pinter's plays are peopled with similar caretakers.

The Shining is not about internal character development. It questions the extent to which a character shapes his environment or to which the environment shapes him. Does the place drive you crazy or are you crazy to live in the place? Are these people ghosts already dead, having been driven to crazy deaths? Or are they ordinary folk infected by the frightening past of the monster hotel?

Jack claims to be a writer. To be a writer is a way of escaping mundane reality. He wants to write a project, not

a book. His life seems to have amounted to nothing. He's a modern man. People turn to writing as they turn to astrology when they don't know where they are going. Jack is deeply frustrated. He is obviously intelligent, some of his phrases are quite vivid, his silences are either empty or profound. When it comes to the act of writing he has no discipline. This is a reflection of his past; he clearly could never stick at any job. His writing project is vague, that is to say he has no idea what to write about.

In the past he has turned to drink. The hotel is dry. Jack's visits to the bar and his conversations with the ghostly barman are banal. Jack is a lost soul. When



Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) with Lloyd (Joe Turkel), the ghostly barman at the Overlook Hotel.

he orders the first drink of the day it's 'The hair of the dog that bit me.' He is doomed to repeat himself. 'I'd give my soul for a drink,' he says. And so he does. Then he confesses his life as drunks confess to their barmen. It seems that in a fit of drunken anger Jack has beaten his young son, Danny. It is obvious that he will do it again. The answer to a drink is another drink.

Jack Nicholson's performance is a splendidly Gothic reworking of Ray Miland's in *The Lost Weekend*. All alcoholics see things that aren't there. They say things they don't mean. They become people they are not. At least on the face of it. Perhaps, though, alcohol is a way of becoming the man you think you ought to have been.

In the loneliness of the Overlook Hotel Jack Torrance becomes an earlier inhabitant of the place. But not exactly. Grady, the earlier caretaker, killed his daughters and wife with an axe and shot himself. When Grady 'visits' Jack, 'accidentally' spilling a drink over the revenant, he takes him to the men's room, a blood red airport lounge. Grady goads Jack, as the new caretaker, to kill Wendy and Danny in the correct Overlook manner, that's to say with an axe. Jack reasons with himself that this must be the correct procedure. His contemporary frustration must be answered with tradition. Later, Jack, ever conventional, gets a fireman's axe and goes about his business. But Jack does not succeed and nor does he shoot himself as Grady did.

So the parallel with the past, real or imagined, is deliberately inexact. Why? Because the world has changed. This is the comment of *The Shining* on the facile convention of horror writing and film-making. In most films the present reproduces exactly the past. But not in *The Shining*. As in life, things turn out quite differently in this horror story.

Jack never 'sees' Grady's two doll-like daughters and no one ever 'sees' Grady's wife. The daughters are 'given' to Danny, the little boy who has the shining, as 'friends' of his own age. The little girls beckon him and tease Danny in his psychic state. Like Danny, Jack absorbs from the hotel what is appropriate to his own age and his own life. Wendy sees

nothing. She does not even understand until very late just how dangerous Jack is, when he actively attacks her, or just how psychic her son is until he writes the word 'Redrum' on the door of her bedroom knowing that when she wakes she will see it in the mirror as 'murder'.

Everyone has certain psychic powers. The limitations are within our own personalities. Even in a psychic sphere we see only what refers to us in our own situation. Only with difficulty can we see what is beyond us. Danny sees an elevator door leaking and then flooding with blood. This staggering image has no relation to any scene in the film. But why should it? Danny has had a glimpse of the future. The flooding of blood has yet to come. As everyone knows who has visited a clairvoyant, the past, the present and the future are often indistinguishable. We are impressed by observations about the past, but often mystified by portents of the future.

The Overlook Hotel will continue its life as a building after our characters have left. The floating furniture in a sea of blood is a scene from the never-to-be-made *The Shining 2*.

The psychic powers of young Danny and of Hallorann, the black cook, who leaves the hotel at the start to go to his home in Florida, are genuine. The two recognise each other from the first. The act of recognition, the act of one person seeing in another what he understands, is crucial to our understanding of the characters in *The Shining*.

Danny has an imaginary friend called Tony. Tony is represented by Danny's index finger wiggling, like a seductive come-on. Tony also has a voice, which seems to come through Danny's mouth. The joking reference to *The Exorcist* is one of many in a film that satirises horror movies. Tony is the ventriloquist's dummy who may eventually come to control his young master in the manner of *Dead of Night*. Tony warns Danny and also entices him. Is Tony out to destroy Danny? We cannot tell.

In one scene, after Danny has gone into the forbidden room 237 and he appears like a ghost before his parents during a terrible row, it is never certain how Danny acquired the bruises on his

neck and arms. Wendy blames Jack because Jack has already attacked his son. We blame whoever it was in room 237. Danny won't speak about it. Jack says, 'Maybe he did it to himself.' That is the least credible explanation but it is possible that Tony did it. Or do we do it all to ourselves in the end?

As Danny stands watching the terrible argument between his parents it is as if he is watching their first encounter, not the primal sexual scene, but the primal psychic scene. In any case, Danny is silent about his visions and adventures. He cannot express himself in words, perhaps because he is too young, perhaps because his experiences are non-verbal. Apart from Tony, the only person who understands Danny is Hallorann, two thousand miles away in Florida. When Danny becomes most frightened that his father will attack and perhaps kill him, Hallorann, in his strange, long apartment in Florida, shines it. Hallorann then flies back to Colorado and drives through the blizzard to get to the Overlook Hotel. His shining costs him his life.

It seems that Hallorann is impelled by his relationship with Danny. But there is another level to Hallorann's perceptions. He is presented from the start as an asexual Negro. He lives alone, but in his Florida apartment he has a photograph of a naked black girl on the wall facing his bed, and another nude over his bed. It so happens that the scene which drives Hallorann finally back to Colorado is not what happens to Danny in room 237, but what happens to Jack in 237 when he visits the room afterwards.

Forced by Wendy, Jack fearfully goes alone into the room. Its colours are ridiculously garish, dominated by a sensual purple. Jack goes into the bathroom. He becomes aware that behind the shower curtain in the bath is a figure. The figure pulls back the opaque curtain and stands up. It is a naked woman. She steps out of the bath. Jack smiles, no terror here, as the woman walks towards him and puts her arms round him. They kiss. As he pulls back from the embrace he sees that he has been clutching an old woman covered in marks that are a cross between leprosy and tattoos. The old woman laughs at him. Jack is horrified. A trick

with time: somehow the old woman is still in the bath as Jack is embracing her across the room. When Wendy asks Jack about room 237, he replies that there was no one there.

This is the strangest scene in the film. It has no reference to earlier events, and it seems completely unconnected with any of the characters. Yet it serves as an important link between all the characters in this psychic drama. It would be wrong to insist on a single interpretation of this scene, but in looking at it it exposes the heart of Kubrick's method in the film.

First, it is a rewrite of the shower scene in *Psycho*. In *Psycho* it is the lady in the shower who is threatened by the monster outside. In *The Shining* this is reversed. Jack is the 'monster', scared by what might emerge from the shower behind the curtain. This reversal of well-known horror conventions is one of many in the film. Later there is a reference again to *Psycho* when Jack menaces Wendy by climbing up the stairs. It is Wendy who has the weapon in her hand, the baseball bat, but it is she who is backing away, frightened by the empty-handed Jack. Underlying many sequences in *The Shining* is a critique of the whole genre of horror movies. The character of Jack Torrance himself is presented as the innocent, not knowing what he is getting himself into, whereas he is in fact the threatening element.

Secondly, the woman turning from slim youth to grotesque age is perhaps symbolic of everyone's most feared destiny, growing old. To watch your own body over a period of years disintegrate before the mirror is an essential horror story for all of us. Fear of old age grips Jack Torrance by the throat as does fear of losing his mind. Growing old and losing your senses, time passing, is a frightening notion that is inescapable.

Thirdly, it is the only overtly sexual scene in the movie. *The Shining* is a strangely chaste horror story. Part of this comes from Jack's sexual indifference; he is always glancing at women, including his wife, but he never actually does anything to them. Lack of sexual drive is characteristic of a paranoid personality. The young naked woman also seems asexual. She looks like one of those models who pose in seedy lunchtime photographic clubs.

Fourthly, the marks on the old woman's body, which so repel Jack, are difficult to identify. When she rises out of the bath in a shot that seems to refer to Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques*, she seems diseased. Then the marks look as if they had been applied like paint. There is also a hint that this woman has come from another world or an earlier civilisation.

All these interpretations have a certain validity without getting near totally to describing the scene. It may come down to the simple fact that the scene in room 237 is no more nor less than a nightmare of its creator. But one of the extraordinary aspects of *The Shining* is the way the simplest events in bright light conjure dark fears, guesses and portents. The movie is constantly ironic, if not downright satirical. The humour of *The Shining* puts it close to *Lolita* and *Strangelove* in Kubrick's work. As in

much of Hitchcock and Buñuel, and to some extent Polanski, there is an underlying crazy comedy which is also deadly serious.

The central horror of *The Shining* is family life. For a child there can be few characters more frightening than his angry father. Danny, despite his stoicism, is terrorised by his father. Wendy is terrorised by her violent husband. Jack is frustrated to the point of rejection and violent aggression towards his family. It is a nice picture of American home life.

The Shining, the least admired major American film in the past year, is an accidental but none the less effective reworking of *Kramer vs. Kramer*, one of the most admired films of the past year. Both treat the collapsing single child family. Kubrick makes no attempt to deal with this subject from the social point of view. The psychology is dealt with in broad strokes; the characters, with the exception of Danny, are grotesque masks. There are, of course, real people behind the masks, but who they are is like saying what will they become. The three people alone in the overlit Overlook Hotel are similar to the three characters in Sartre's play, *Huis Clos*. They are in the hell of each other. Danny sees his father as an eye-rolling lunatic. Jack sees Wendy as a weak, whining housewife, and Wendy sees nothing. Until the end of the story she seems completely devoid of psychic power. It is almost as if *The Shining* is showing that bright people are more capable of understanding telepathically than less bright people.

The family hierarchy, Dad, Mom and kid, is very strong. The equivalent hierarchy in the Overlook Hotel itself is the idea of the maze in which they are lost, both inside and out. The more intelligent you are the easier it is for you to solve the puzzle of the maze. The only character who can get out of the maze is Danny. Not because of his psychic ability but because of his high intelligence. They seem to go together in Kubrick's behaviourist view. The maze is not treated in the manner of *Marienbad*. In *Marienbad* the labyrinth of the hotel is a philosophical question. It cannot be solved. It can only be apprehended and interpreted. In *The Shining* the maze is a Sunday morning puzzle, and the most intelligent member of the family will always come up with the correct solution first.

There is a sense in the Overlook Hotel that it represents the world after the bombs have gone off; the loneliness, the incredible store of food, ways to survive.

The Shining may be the first film of the post-nuclear age to come. A bizarre follow-up to *Strangelove*. The music of Penderecki, the *Dies Irae* of the Auschwitz Cantata, creates an exactly post-Apocalyptic tone. The music of Ligeti and Bartók is music for the world that followed the Second Vienna School of Strauss and Mahler. The Ligeti has a mocking tone as if laughing at all past music and at people with notions of fixed values. The Bartók is wonderfully lyrical, but who, among ordinary filmgoers, would hear the strong music of Bela Bartók and think instinctively that it is lyrical and dance-like? But there was a

time when Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* was considered unacceptable and esoteric by his own publisher.

The Shining has a lot in common with post-war music. It seems technically brilliant and yet fundamentally heartless. It seems deliberately clever and yet remains enigmatic. Kubrick has tried to bridge a gap which has occurred in the language of film. How can you express dissonance and fragmentation, the essential features of our present lives, in a manner which respects traditional harmonies? Can disorder ever be expressed in an orderly way? Kubrick has reached the limits of conservative film art in *The Shining*. It used to be thought that the antonym of art was nature. But this Shakespearian opposition is no longer true. Art and nature are both by definition devoted to order. The opposite of art is enigma.

The Shining is not an enigmatic film. It is actually about enigma. That is why Kubrick is instinctively drawn to technology in his work, camera technology in particular. The machine is better able to cope with enigma than the human hand. Most enigmatic paintings from Cimabue's Crucifix to de Chirico's piazzas somehow suggest the presence of a machine. *The Shining* is about this machine that cannot be seen. It is, if you like, the machine in the ghost.

Shining denotes the ability to communicate telepathically, to see backwards into the past and forwards into the future. *The Shining* is nothing more nor less than a metaphor for the cinema itself. Film has the shining. Danny is probably the director of the movie. He is certainly identified with the camera. The Steadicam tracking shots through the hotel corridors and then in the maze evoke the exhilaration of a small boy racing about on his tricycle. He imagines himself to be a machine.

In *The Shining*, Kubrick plays with the Steadicam like a toy. It is essentially childlike. He wants to find out all the things he can do with his latest acquisition. Danny's visions are represented in cuts, in montage, so the boy is not only the camera he is also the movieola. The director-child is seeing his own parents and the world around him. In a way the hotel becomes his doll's house, like the model in Albee's *Tiny Alice*, and his father and mother are turned into his neurotic children. If they go crazy from time to time he can still control them with his superior intelligence and visionary ability. Film, after all, is the art of seeing and showing from a fresh point of view. But the boy is not an artist. He is before art, and after it. Picasso said it took him ten years to draw like Raphael and a lifetime to draw like a child. There is the child in all of us. There is the artist in all of us, and to varying degrees we are all capable of shining.

If the cinema was born around 1900 then he is eighty years old today. *The Shining* reminds us how far the cinema has come and how much it has stayed the same. It shines bits of an enigmatic film future which in the last image turns out to be a still from the past. There is no immutable order of experience when the past becomes a picture of what might have been. ■

THE FILM THAT NEARLY NEVER WAS



Photograph: Herbie Yamaguchi.

Early in 1981, BBC Television will be screening the film **ELIZABETH SUSSEX** has made about the National Film Archive. Here she records the remarkable history of a project which was first put forward almost twenty years ago by Robert Vas, and finally completed by her in 1980.

The idea of making a film for BBC Television about the National Film Archive first occurred to Robert Vas in the early 1960s. The subject was taken up by Huw Wheldon in 1964, by Stephen Hearst in 1965 and again by Barrie Gavin in 1975. Intimations of it spanned most of Robert's career as a film-maker. The young Hungarian exile who first made his mark with a documentary called *Refuge England* in the last Free Cinema programme became an established director in British television. His unique skill was in revealing through recorded evidence of all kinds (particularly photographs and library film) the human reality of history. The Archive subject seemed central to his whole development, yet it remained an unrealised project until after his death in 1978.

There recently came into my possession what was probably the first script Robert wrote on the subject. Entitled *The Treasure House of Aston Clinton*, it was initially autobiographical in approach: 'Times and films are changing, but the memory of one's first visit to the cinema is basically always the same. To my grandfather in the early 1900s, to myself in the 30s, to my son in the 60s it is the same thrill, the same expectation when the lights dim and the projector starts to roll ...' Or later: 'During the love scene a lady attendant came along and sprayed some air disinfectant. I can

still smell the scent of artificial roses and feel the tiny drops as they settle on my bare knees ... But that evening I was finally able to put it down in my diary: At last I've seen Garbo. Phenomenal.'

Most of the other ideas were substantially the origin of the film I was to inherit in 1978. A very central section came to grips with the nature of the material in the Archive, the wonder of what we were perhaps discovering *only now*: 'We see an early newsreel item and suddenly reach a moment in which the essence of a period or a great historic moment (perhaps World War One) is expressed in an indirect way, condensed into some small, unexpected human touch. With thrill and admiration the question comes up: is *that* how we lived, how we looked?' There was a 'rapturous' montage of film excerpts of all kinds until a shot freezes, develops strange spots, is gradually obliterated. The theme of nitrate decomposition was followed by that of saving the record. The Archive's preservation officer Harold Brown's hand-made printing machine copies Gance's *Napoleon*. 'The contrast of the grandeur of the film and the Meccano bits busily working to salvage it from death and oblivion should express how pitifully earthbound is this technical art.'

It was not until 1975 that I became associated with the project. As a freelance I had been researching most of Robert's major productions for the BBC over the previous six years. We had talked about the Archive film but, apart from making a few suggestions about poetry he might include in it (particularly lines from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*), I had nothing to do with the new script he was writing. This script had no directly autobiographical element and began in primeval darkness. 'Then as if a beam of light would search in the darkness ... Suddenly the beam finds what looks like a primitive drawing ... It is, in fact, a cave painting: 15,000 years

old.' From there it seemed possible, to anyone aware of Robert's methods, that most of the history of art as well as cinema could end up in the cutting room. The autobiographical element had in fact widened to embrace, at least by inference, the roots of self-expression in prehistory and the whole of mankind's subsequent striving for a kind of immortality. The subject was so unashamedly ambitious that I was aggrieved on its behalf to see that he had described it on the front page as an *Omnibus* 'item'.

Of course, the truth is that all life can be found in the Archive, and you have to find a way of making a selection from something with obvious resemblances to Kane's 'collection of everything so big it can never be catalogued or appraised.' From a practical point of view, this script averted the possibility of producing a mere scrapbook or even showcase of film 'clips' by integrating all the pieces in a larger purpose. The excerpts would come in like notes in music, recurrent phrases in different keys, sometimes whole movements—all strategically placed. They would be true to the general pattern as a direct consequence of remaining true to themselves. The central theme, as I saw it, was that of time apparently caught for ever in each individual frame of film but never actually arrested. Robert might not have described it this way, and I think it generally unhelpful to try to put in words what, by its very implication, can be adequately conveyed only in a language that has better tools than words. What I can say is that the script with its strong structure built on fundamental matters, provided a working context for every kind of experience, real or imagined, that the camera can record. But it was better than that because so much of it was funny. No doubt about it, Robert was going to celebrate the art of the film, not by quoting from it with a poker-face, but by putting the magic into practice. That this is possible with compilation material

was something he had shown already to eloquent effect.

We went into production in early 1976. I was the researcher and did the viewing at the Archive. My list finally totalled nearly 200 films. Many titles stemmed from Robert's earlier viewings or were specifically mentioned in the script. Others were introduced by me as a result of reading the script and using my imagination. There was such a wide area of agreement between us that I no longer remember which these were. Occasionally Robert would ring up and suggest something else. Quite a large proportion of the material could be envisaged in more than one context. About fifteen per cent of it dropped out at an early stage because the Archive possessed (at that particular time) only a negative, fine grain or master positive that had already enjoyed its maximum quota of viewings. The Archive's first duty, after all, is not to make films generally accessible but to try to preserve at least one copy in as good a condition as possible. Certain feature films in this category (e.g., *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*) could ultimately be obtained from a distributor.

The losses were greater in virtually unknown territory. To make a random selection: *Woman Undressing*, c. 1896, a film attributed to Max Skladanowsky owing to the characteristics of the perforations; *Cretinetti al Cinema*, 1911, an incomplete comedy in which Cretinetti plays havoc in the projection box of a cinema; *Animated Putty* (title missing), a British film of 1911 in which a lump of putty assumes various shapes including that of Mephistopheles and two of his imps. It would have been possible to dupe such material unseen, but with all the rest of the Archive at our disposal we obviously never contemplated such an indulgence. Besides, viewings of far more tempting subjects could, and did, result in disappointment. The classic example was something catalogued as *First Film Ever Made* (sic), p. William Friese-Greene. 1889. 'It shows only a piece of damaged film. N.G.' I wrote in the second of the four notebooks that were to follow me right through the production. Poor Friese-Greene! The lack of recognition accorded to him in his lifetime seems to be quite ruthlessly reflected in the few scraps of his work that have managed to survive. Archives exist so that people should be luckier surely.

A few days after I started viewing, I happened to stand in for Robert at a meeting at the BBC at which the department responsible for clearing copyright on film sequences declared the Archive film virtually impossible to make, and proposed to spend no further time on it until a satisfactory working method had been established. I reported back in some despair. 'What shall I do now?' I asked. 'Go away and get on with the viewing,' Robert said.

What were the copyright problems that dogged this production? I think they all stemmed from two facts:

1. The Archive owns none of the material deposited in it, and cannot release anything without the direct authorisation of the owner concerned.

2. The main interest of the Archive's

collection is its diversity, but even to begin to show this would involve a potentially wider range of sources than any other imaginable compilation of a similar length.

As far as the first point is concerned, the Archive's very existence obviously depends on scrupulous adherence to its agreement with depositors. The practical complications are that films change hands and people die. Tracing ownership can be a lengthy and sometimes even abortive operation, and not all owners will necessarily consent to the use of excerpts, particularly in the commercial film industry where policies fluctuate from year to year. If a film is in the Archive, failure to find an owner for it can be tantamount to a refusal because only a lenient interpretation of the copyright laws allows that many films are in the public domain, and in this respect the Archive cannot afford to be lenient.

Relating this to the second point, it is possible to check out a limited field before you start, but the Archive subject was always too diffuse to be assessed with any certainty that way. It would be faster in the long run simply to plunge in and discover as you went along how great the losses were. A lot of it would drop out anyway, because it was impossible to work out how it would cut together in advance on paper. I can see now that for those deputed to try to clear the whole list, the project would probably only have begun to seem reasonable had it been envisaged not as a single programme but as a major series with a budget to match. Even Thames Television's *Hollywood* had a more manageable brief than this.

While I enjoyed months of concentrated viewing at Aston Clinton and Berkhamsted, a working arrangement was in fact hammered out, and later that year the Archive got an encouragingly favourable response from a fairly representative cross-section of copyright owners. The film was all set to go, and then a very odd thing happened. That is, nothing happened. I am unclear why this was. It must have had something to do with the fact that Robert got the chance to make a film that mattered to him even more: *My Homeland*, a haunting evocation of the country that was constantly in his mind's eye, never actually revisited since 1956. This was twenty years on. *My Homeland* went out on the BBC's *Omni-bus* programme on 4 November, the anniversary of the day the Hungarian uprising was crushed by the Soviet army.

The last time I ever saw Robert he said I should take over the Archive film and that he was going to suggest this at the BBC. I was foolishly overjoyed. I say foolishly because I, like everyone else including Robert, had no idea what in the meantime would be lost. Not long after, Robert was dead. No film, no directing assignment could conceivably fill the void, which is probably why I then determined I would finish the Archive film. What made the resolve viable was that the Archive's curator, David Francis (who had been actively involved in plans for this production at every stage in its history right back to the time when it was first put up to his predecessor, Ernest Lindgren), at once

offered me the same unqualified support he had always given Robert.

In November 1978 the Archive film went into production again, this time with Christopher Martin as its executive producer. For the first time in two years I read the script that I was now contracted to direct. It had taken on a whole new layer of meaning in the time between. I must have known that films for Robert were like life blood, and yet it registered only now. 'A single shot from a newsreel that tells us the whole spirit of a historical period. As long as the piece of film lives the little soldier lives, too. The event lives. If the film dies the soldier will be finally dead and cannot be brought back to life again.' The responsibility suddenly seemed enormous, but the first priority was copyright clearance.

There was a list of 127 films (the result of my 1976 viewings) to be cleared if possible. While work on this began, I did further viewing. A certain amount of crucial selection for central sequences had been left to the end because Robert was going to do it. Potential titles (including a very small proportion of footage owned by the BBC) eventually totalled about 150. Was copyright clearance as laborious and time-consuming an operation as the experts had always predicted? The honest answer must be yes.

Copyright clearance is the kind of work to which Parkinson's Law undoubtedly applies, but film-making is not. I had a schedule which extended through filming to editing and ended in the summer of 1979. It was essential from a creative point of view that copyright clearance should be completed before the other activities began, but Parkinson's Law makes no provision for creativity. About two months in, it was apparent that copyright clearance was expanding to fill the whole schedule. All my efforts to combat this merely exacerbated it. For instance, my general policy was to make a last ditch stand for every individual film regardless of the amount of it likely to be used. This was really the only way to be sure of having anything, but of course it also guaranteed a steadily increasing volume of work.

People who might have known better were always pointing out to me that subjects I was losing (like *All Quiet on the Western Front*) must be clearable because they had already been shown by the BBC. The fact that clearing excerpts is a very different matter from negotiating for transmissions of whole films produced as much surprise as the fact that previous clearance of an excerpt provides no guarantee of being able to clear it again. As the memos and phone calls dragged on into the spring—no time to wait for a reply from the US Head Office; beyond the scope of the budget; an unsatisfactory situation as far as the Archive is concerned, i.e. no claimant, a dubious claimant, two rival claimants—I remembered Robert's frustration in similar circumstances with a better understanding. 'This is rubbish,' he would say. 'This is not film-making.'

I redrafted the script several times in an attempt to make it represent something nearer the final picture. It was a

largely futile exercise because, even with the most amenable licensees, complications could and did arise: the ban on excerpts from *King Kong*, the two-minute maximum length imposed on *Citizen Kane*. Surprisingly, Jacques Cousteau and Richard Burton both exercised their right to refuse our request in respect of films they owned. Walt Disney was particularly generous, but most of the rest of the American industry was pricing itself out of the market. These films gain nothing from publicity because they have already received the lion's share of attention. In effect, the message was double-edged. With a few exceptions, we were better off in fresher fields where, from our point of view, the grazing was actually richer.

As soon as authorisations came through, the Archive was having the relevant sequences from sound films duped; we simply ordered the footages I had noted in 1976. Silent films, however, were allowed out to the BBC's telecine machine the Polygon. Here at last I was in contact with the real thing again, and here too I found an enthusiasm to match my own. Most of the technicians who worked on it at any stage were fascinated by the Archive film, and came up with all their own suggestions. The Polygon could do a great deal more than copying film at the right speed. We used it, among other things, to freeze frames, correct the racking of shrunken film and bleach out shots. The earliest material we transferred on it was E. J. Marey's studies in animal movement (1884-86). Where the edge of the original plates showed we could alter the framing so that the image filled the screen. Marey himself would surely have been fascinated by our experiments on TK1. (In the end we had to lose Marey. The competition was too keen.)

We transferred all the silent material directly on to 16mm film negative. Contrary to what David Robinson wrote in his recent SIGHT AND SOUND article about the *Hollywood* series, it is not essential to transfer to video-tape in order to take advantage of the Polygon. If the programme is going to be transmitted on tape, the *Hollywood* method is the way to achieve perfection because it cuts out at least one process, but the final editing of an all-film production on video-tape is a laborious and very expensive operation which the small proportion of silent film in our case could not justify. I can of course endorse the *Hollywood* findings that laboratories today seem virtually incapable of reproducing either the tonal range or sharpness of black and white nitrate film, particularly when they are printing on colour stock for grading purposes. Such is progress. A good deal of the loss in quality can be recovered by final regrading on a programme tariff control machine, so that with luck you lose on the swings only a little more than you ultimately gain on the roundabouts.

About the *Hollywood* series I think it should be said, however, that a vast amount of research must, rightly, have gone into finding the best material that still exists, because not even the Polygon can improve on the technical quality of

the original fed into it. There is no remedy for second or third generation prints, missing frames, faded images or scratches too deep ever to be polished out. Thames Television's brilliant evocation of silent Hollywood as it looked in its heyday is not to be found in any archive. What you find there, to quote from Ernest Lindgren's introduction to the first published catalogue of the NFA, are 'scraps of flotsam and jetsam, the wreckage of a vast output of film, which purely by chance have survived the destructive storm of time...' Opposite one of my early choices, *Metamorphosis of a Butterfly*, 1911, I wrote 'Condition too bad to view.' Obviously we lost a lot this way, because you must have good quality for television, but it would have been untrue to our subject to let purely technical considerations take over. In my view one of the strongest excerpts we included was from Méliès' *Voyage à travers l'impossible*, hand-coloured in 1904. This was specially copied for us by Harold Brown at Aston Clinton, and the colour is sensational. The scratches that were impossible to remove from the original make their own point, I think.

In our filming the emphasis was not on interviews but on film cans and their contents and the various situations in which these ostensibly inanimate objects find themselves. I wondered if any cameraman could share the strange enthusiasm I had undoubtedly inherited from Robert for such scenes. I need have had no fears. On the first day Colin Waldeck was discovering in the strips of film being washed and dried at Henderson's laboratory (now a division of the Archive) a fragile, fleeting beauty beyond anything I had known for certain could be captured. Each of the Archive's locations has a very distinctive atmosphere. Despite the housing development that now engulfs it, the original site at Aston Clinton still resembles a homely cottage hospital. The stately house at Berkhamsted has lost none of its elegant evocation of another age by the addition of a whole new wing of vaults for storing safety film.

The most dramatic place is the former Ministry of Defence site in Warwickshire. Here, in the middle of a barbed wire encirclement miles from anywhere, strange futuristic structures have been erected to accommodate the whole of our inheritance of nitrate film. The old vaults, where the bombs were kept, are gigantic, grass-covered mounds with wide entrance passages and enormous doors. Inside you find high domed ceilings, intricate networks of mysterious chambers, almost anything you expect of a cave, a pyramid, a dungeon, a tomb. Luckily, many cans had not yet been moved out of these caverns into the new vaults when we arrived, and we could film it all. We shot everything the films go through, even the evil-smelling corpse-like condition in which the odd reel of nitrate still arrives at Aston Clinton.

By then, of course, I had departed to some extent from Robert's script, in substance if not in spirit, because he never saw Henderson's laboratory or the Warwickshire site. He had written in a

sequence about junk film being stripped of its emulsion and the celluloid melted down to serve as raw material for cheap plastic goods. Although the idea was outdated, I thought its removal left such a hole in the script that I replaced it with something else. At a top security refinery in the West Midlands we filmed tons of photographic material (of which ciné-film is incidentally the least valuable) being swept into incinerators and burnt in order to recover silver from its ashes. Tired old film was rejuvenated into shiny new silver ingots: another scale of values, a different aspect of the dereliction.

Everything was very fine—except that when Dave King started editing only about half the excerpts had physically reached the cutting room. It was back to memos and phone calls at this (in all my expectations) potentially most creative time of all. The missing pieces were inevitably dotted everywhere through the film. We tried to start at the beginning (which is usually advisable) and so proceeded almost immediately to insert sections of blank spacing where the late arrivals would probably be. I say 'probably' because until you have the chance to try it you are never sure.

This uncertainty cast its shadow over all the lovely things that started to happen in reels two and three. Some of the missing pieces were not cleared yet. There were always so many *ifs* and *buts*. When we reached the end of the assembly, we filled in the blanks in reel one as quickly as possible. (We were running out of time.) The result was two montage sequences of silent film pleasantly cut to music: Lumière, Skladanowsky, *A Visit to Peek Frean and Co's Biscuit Works*, *Cabiria* etc. with Schubert; the Brighton School, Méliès, the Keystone Cops, Chaplin, Hepworth etc. with Mozart. The sequences would have made quite acceptable programme fillers, but the music was really killing the pieces of film concerned. I added commentary in an attempt to bring out the individuality of the excerpts. This introduced a quite new element of pedantry. The whole thing obviously needed rethinking, but at this point we literally ran out of time. The editing schedule was up, and the film was shelved.

I think that was the first time I became seriously aware of my own mortality. The odds were, after all, too high, but I had gone far beyond the point where I might have persuaded myself that it was only a film at stake. The copyright story actually had a happy ending. The last excerpts had finally reached the cutting room the week before we had to stop. Cans neatly labelled with about a hundred very varied titles (many of them covering several possible sequences) went off for safe-keeping to a vault at Ealing. We were laughing really.

Cutting was eventually resumed in 1980, this time with Ray Frawley as editor. The first thing we did was dismantle the two music sequences at the beginning and reconstruct most of the first part. After that we tightened up the structure throughout. About two weeks in, there came a moment when the excerpts everywhere took over. They lived and breathed. We'd made it. ■



'Kagemusha': The dismissal of the thief (Tatsuya Nakadai).

A Shaggy Ghost Story

Kagemusha/Richard Combs

The setting of *Kagemusha* (Fox) is one of those periods of historical unrest when the myths of a nation-in-the-making seem to intersect with more timeless mythology. Japan, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, is beset by ceaseless internal wars (the 'Sengoku Jidai') as rival warlords compete for possession of the capital, Kyoto. Change is in the air—one of the warlords is already flirting with the West—and a lot of grumbling about the need to unify the country. In the historical event, the ferment turned out to be premature: under the repressive régime which shortly took over, Japan's modernisation was postponed for nearly three centuries. The period, in effect, is out of its time, out of historical sequence. This breakdown, appropriately enough, is crystallised in the event which initially drew Kurosawa to the subject: the Battle of Nagashino, in 1575, in which the Takeda clan, one of the most powerful, suffered total, mystifying defeat at the hands of its enemies. Kurosawa himself (*Time Out*, No. 552) ascribes the defeat to a kind of collective death wish on the part of the Takeda generals, who so revered their recently deceased lord that they wanted only to rejoin him in a better world. *Kagemusha* has been made in this mystical breach in history's fabric—the Battle of Nagashino is now its climax—and its form might be described as a kind of shaggy ghost story.

If the period is out of joint, then so—at times bafflingly—is Kurosawa's treatment of it. However many legions of extras cross the screen in however much authentically recreated armour, their impact is softened by such fairy-tale niceties as the flute music which issues from a besieged castle, signalling to the Takeda army whether their enemy's morale is waxing or waning, and by such figurative devices as the serpentine over-

head shot of a messenger scuttling down endlessly twisting steps and waking a whole army, like vari-coloured insects, as he goes. Much has been made of the fact that Kurosawa kept *War and Peace* by his side during the filming: for support, perhaps, but not reference, for one misses here any feeling of the crunch of history on ordinary lives. One misses, in fact, anything of ordinary life: the elements blow through *Kagemusha*, enigmas of fate, time and history, but little sense of the plight of a petty thief who is forced to impersonate a famous warlord. To call the film an 'intimate' epic is to underplay its grandiloquence, the Shakespearean design in which the story of the 'kagemusha' (shadow warrior) becomes an interrogation of the very notions of power and kingship. For all the elegance of his creation, one senses Kurosawa's delight, much as in *Throne of Blood*, in its barbarity.

It is also a particularly Shakespearean conceit to use play-acting, the comedy of the low mimicking the high, to satirise man's overreaching ambition. *Kagemusha* begins with a long static shot in which Shingen (Tatsuya Nakadai), head of the Takeda clan, and his brother Nobukado question a surly wretch (also Tatsuya Nakadai) who has just been spared crucifixion on the strength of his resemblance to Shingen. The latter is in search of a new kagemusha (Nobukado, who has always done the job, is not really enough of a lookalike) to spread confusion among his enemies. After some banter about the possibility of the warlord's father having sired this disreputable twin, and the thief's accusation that his own crimes are laughable compared to Shingen's despoliation, he is contracted and put into reserve as a kagemusha. This sequence-shot, placidly distanced, is the first of many counsels of war,

strategy, deception and betrayal which further depersonalise the film as an 'intimate' epic. The duration of the shot—teasing the audience to spot the process work that has combined one actor in the two roles—is a token both of Kurosawa's magisterial indifference to technical matters (like Ford, perhaps, crossing sight lines in action) and his 'play's the thing' theme.

The kagemusha soon has his moment, when Shingen is mortally wounded by a musket shot during a siege and instructs his generals to keep his imminent death a secret for three years, during which time the Takeda clan must not venture outside their own territory. At first happy to play the general by parading in front of his troops, the kagemusha is as mysteriously moved as everyone else by the news that Shingen is actually dead and that he is expected to take his place. He declines the part, but then, witnessing the despatch of Shingen's body into a mist-shrouded lake, as mysteriously changes his mind and begs the generals to make use of him. Thereafter he gradually loses himself to the role, coached in Shingen's every gesture and expression, and even reprimanded for overstepping his dramatic limits when he improvises a witty response to Katsuyori (Kenichi Hagiwara), Shingen's neglected and ambitious son, who tries to put the kagemusha on the spot during a strategy briefing.

The peculiar torment of being someone else morning, noon and night—the thief, somebody says, must feel he has been crucified anyway—prompts Kurosawa's most extravagant effect: a floridly coloured nightmare sequence in which the kagemusha is pursued by the armoured ghost of the man he is impersonating. But the theme is of little moment in the film, because psychological interest loses out to a different rhetoric. 'The play is over,' announces the kagemusha when he first meets Shingen's concubines, deciding that the only way to convince them that he is their master is by first 'pretending' to be an imposter; and the phrase is repeated when the kagemusha is finally exposed, tempted in a moment of vanity to try the black stallion which only Shingen could ride. If the pain of being a kagemusha is not really the subject, nor it seems is the secret pleasure: Nobukado merely indicates that, however much he suffered in the role, he has felt even worse, a nobody, since he ceased to be his brother's shadow.

The reason, perhaps, is that the significance of the kagemusha's story lies elsewhere. Not that he is a theatrical double trying to become real, but that, to all intents and purposes, he is Shingen's ghost. What he presides over, during the 'holding action' of his three-year interregnum, is the passage of the Takeda clan from history into myth—their progress towards the mysterious discontinuity of the Battle of Nagashino. After giving himself away and being expelled from Shingen's palace, the kagemusha continues to 'haunt' the Takeda,

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a wild-eyed, spectral witness to Shingen's official burial—three years after his death—and then to the battle itself. Kat-suyori, ignoring his father's last instruction, leads the army out of the clan's domain and into the slaughter—depicted only in the horrified reaction of the general staff, and of the kagemusha watching, with defiant improbability, from some bushes in the midst of the battle. The defeat, therefore, remains something of a predestined enigma. The modern weaponry of the enemy clans, and some scenes of slow-motion death agony, might nevertheless suggest an updating of Kurosawa's Western imagery, from Ford to Peckinpah. The Takeda are the clan that came too late and stayed too long.

Kagemusha has already been taken too glibly as a late masterpiece, the director's final statement and summing up. In some respects, however, it seems slightly uncomfortable and formally unresolved: the broadness of the characters as 'humours'—familiar from the limbo settings of the Toshiro Mifune samurai films—combined with their peculiar flatness as historical cut-outs; the tactical confusion brilliantly marshalled in one night-time battle panorama combined with some choppy continuity in the early stages, perhaps imposed by the shortening of the 'international version.' The film might be better taken as a holding action in itself, a phantom play in which the director is omnipresent even if in shifting, sometimes unreliable forms. □



'Mon Oncle d'Amérique': René (Gérard Depardieu) makes an unwelcome offer.

The Animal Condition

Mon Oncle d'Amérique/Penelope Houston

Mon Oncle d'Amérique (Gala) opens with the image of a pulsating heart. It closes with shots of streets devastated by bombs or bulldozers; a mural of a tree, fresh and green and hopeful, running the full height of one of the tall buildings; a close shot moving in on the texture of the brickwork. Characteristically, Alain Resnais does not make a meal of these images; they are not the first or last thing one would take away from the film. But any film-maker who uses them—and particularly this film-maker—must be taken as implying that his purposes are large ones: the human condition is on view.

And, in this case, something of the animal condition. Resnais' film, scripted with great verve and ingenuity by Jean Gruault, of course has its point of departure in the biological theories of Dr Henri Laborit. Theories about aggression and the mechanisms of defence, which lead from the laboratory rat to stress illnesses in humans, and to the general contention that it is healthier to fight than to run, and rather healthier to run than merely to cower. Resnais has said that the three interlinked stories in the film are not

intended to 'illustrate' Laborit—by which he really means that there is no simple one to one relationship. I've seen a suggestion that as Laborit's views are not necessarily taken as gospel by other biologists, the film is in some way suspect. But the point is surely subtler: the film-makers are not so much endorsing a theory as manipulating its suggestive insights, its yardstick for measuring human conduct. And, of course, there's something more: 'A living creature is a memory that acts,' pronounces Dr Laborit. That sounds like the biologist for Resnais.

In the narrative, the memories that principally act are those of Jean, René and Janine, all of whom grow up with some expectations of success (this is prosperous France of the 70s, not Britain), and each of whom to an extent achieves it. The film opens on a patchwork of half-sentences and images—the voices of the trio, with scenes and objects of their lives. A woman's voice takes over, giving brisk factual biographies; she adds one of Laborit himself, so that he is woven as it were into the edge of Resnais'

fictional carpet. When he appears, spruce, demonstrative and expository, the thread he follows runs in parallel with the stories. But there is a link through the laboratory rats, also spruce and demonstrative, and the other animals—a boar, a tortoise—that appear.

The narratives, in themselves, take us across present-day France. Jean (Roger Pierre) comes from a comfortable upper middle class background tinged by Celtic eccentricity: he stays with an aged grandfather on a lonely, romantic, blue-green island, reads about a 'King of Gold', grows up to become a broadcasting executive and then a politician. René's family are small farmers and good Catholics. His dreams are of learning accountancy to run the farm more efficiently, but he escapes from it, goes into the textile industry, advances through middle management, and comes a cropper only when the multi-national style leaves him behind. Gérard Depardieu plays him with a marvellous sad containment: in the world of thirty years ago, he might have been happy. Janine (Nicole Garcia), whose working class parents are piously left wing, becomes an actress (Resnais' brief view of fringe theatre stands with *Jane Austen in Manhattan*) and then a designer in textiles. She has an affair with Jean, and later works for René's employers; the most versatile of the trio, she is not necessarily, the film's last scenes suggest, the least vulnerable.

The structure of the film is at the same time vigorously taut and excitingly free. Kites can be flown. It would be disingenuous to deny that the stories are likely to be read by an audience as case histories, checked against the laboratory information. But, having set up one system of cross-references, the film can more easily accommodate others: the use of animals; the linking of the characters to their favourite film stars (the stolid René, with his stomach ulcer, would like to be the rock-like Gabin); even the instants of impudently graphic illustration when white rats' heads fleetingly appear on human shoulders. Gears can be quickly slipped, as when René, having yielded to despair in a crisis, meets a querulous stranger in a hotel car park and startles both the man and himself by knocking him flat. And scenes can be played openly for comedy, like the episodes of René's dealings with the usurper in his office, beginning with lunges across the desk to beat the other man to the telephone, and culminating in the disastrous dinner party, when the interloper achieves a triumph of oneupmanship by refusing to eat any of the delights cooked by his host. No one mood predominates, and the film's buoyancy comes from the swift forward movement ensured by Resnais' superlative editing skills, imposed on a structure of strictly relevant allusion and appropriately behavioural observation. There's no 'psychology' in the narrative, none of the dreams of *Providence*, since the clues come from outside it.

The ending of the first half sees the principals at points of decision. Jean loses his job, in a sequence which is itself

a small comedy of office manners; Janine nobly gives up Jean when his wife appeals to her with the lie (as it turns out) that she is dying of cancer; René faces the challenge of a new appointment, at the cost of leaving his family behind. A title tells us that two years have passed, although from the changes in the characters' lives, including apparently the addition of several children to Jean's family, it seems longer than that. The second half opens with more from Dr Laborit, and a return to the images of childhood, the pieces of the mosaic now forming a clearer, subtler pattern at this intersection of past and future.

Part two of the film compresses its action into a day or so. In a superb episode, Jean and Janine meet by chance on his island. He tries to run away, can't manage it, finds himself caught in the setting that means most to him and the emotions that mean most to her. The sequence ends with Jean fretting about getting his clothes wet when they are caught by the tide, and left in the shallows with his trousers rolled to his knees

while Janine wades off to fetch the rowing boat. The extraordinarily beautiful setting, used moments earlier for its associations as any child's ideal desert island, turns farce into something richer.

Janine's crisis is the discovery that Jean's wife is alive, well and confident of her place in the world. Janine, one would guess, has built her own self-esteem on a grand gesture which has turned out to be fraudulent. But in her professional life, the trip to the island has been a sentimental detour. Her immediate business is to join with a silkily imperturbable colleague in the painless disposal of René, whose factory's line in trousers is not keeping up with 'le style jogging'. They meet at a hotel of the international faceless sort, but René refuses to play by the rules. He goes back to his other world, the lodging with the ageing landlady, the hideous patterned wallpaper, the crucifix, and hangs himself. Or, rather, he doesn't quite hang himself—cut down and rushed to hospital, he is left at least with the comfort of his family.

Janine goes on to a last meeting with Jean, who is off on one of those aristocratic hunting parties which is bound to echo *La Règle du Jeu*. They are after wild boar, and as Janine moves down one of the open rides cut through the forest, there's a shot and she falls. The image is of the wounded animal. But Janine is on her feet, wounded only by at last understanding that for Jean life without her is the comfortable alternative. She beats furiously at him with her hands. There's a long final look down the ride at them, with the sky darkening.

The narrative ends there, and possibly the film should. The last shots—the shattered street and the green tree—move it into a generalisation that has so far been resisted, despite all the evident temptations of the theme. Not since *Muriel*, perhaps, has Resnais made a film structured for such precise, delicate and sympathetic effects; and it may not be coincidental that this is also the first film he has made for many years, really since *Muriel*, which is wholly French and of the present. □

Notes from the Underground

Stalker/Gilbert Adair

The narrative structure of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (Contemporary), as distinct from the meandering expedition that occupies more than half its running time, is relatively, unexpectedly straightforward. The 'stalker' of the title (referred to by the English word throughout the film) is a guide who, for what is presumably a paltry fee, escorts two clients, a writer and a scientist, into an abandoned rural area named 'the Zone'. Policed by armed guards in jeeps or on watchtowers, its sole inhabitants some lonely, haunted dogs and an occasional bird or fish, the Zone harbours at its centre a Room in which, it is claimed, one's wishes are granted. How it has come to be invested with such a 'gift' is never explained, unless by a vague allusion to a meteorite that might have crashed there twenty years before (a conjecture possibly confirmed by the fact that the sparse flowers which have begun to bloom again have no scent); but its potential for sowing unrest is so feared by the state that the journey has to be undertaken clandestinely, with the most exquisite precaution.

Not that, once safely inside the region, the trio's problems are over: though located no more than a few hundred yards from the Zone's border, the Room would appear to be surrounded by a labyrinth of invisible—perhaps even, in a literal sense, immaterial—booby-traps, which only the stalker, possessed of mediumistic powers, is capable of negotiating without mishap. In the end, the scientist, denouncing the false hopes the Room must encourage, toys with the notion of blowing it up, while the writer, who had sought to spur his flagging creativity, contemptuously declines even

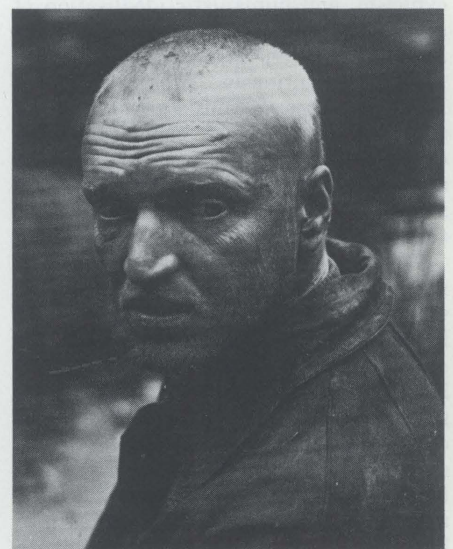
to formulate a wish. To the wretched, by now half-demented stalker is left the Sisyphean task of sustaining a doubtful faith of which he is a humble priest but without which he is nothing.

An allegory, of course. Except that, where in most allegories the subject is displaced to allow the object to emerge to greater effect, Tarkovsky, with truly heroic deviousness, eliminates the genre's random factor (eg, the orchestra as microcosm in Fellini's *Prova d'Orchestra*) by setting *Stalker* not, as one would expect (as his Soviet masters doubtless expected), in an undefined mythical country, even less in the 'America' of the original novel, but, astonishingly, in the Soviet Union itself. Or rather (and this surely constitutes a first for contemporary Russian cinema), in nothing less than his own personal vision of the Soviet Union—a vision untrammelled by the precepts of socialist realism, unquestionably biased, yet riveting in its ferocity and pessimism. With this film, Tarkovsky re-entrusts to the medium a responsibility which in the West is upheld, if at all, only by documentaries (and by a rare maverick work like Pasolini's *Salò*): that of testifying, of *showing*. (And, as always, it's the films which show that are prevented from being shown.)

What we are given to see, in a preternaturally vivid style rendered Dos-toevskyan by monochrome photography whose raspingly harsh textures suggest some grainy newsreel footage of the future, is a terrifying gallery of icons familiar from Solzhenitsyn and exploited—often to dubious ends—by the West but, till now, rigorously expunged from Soviet screens (and still

likely to be projected only outside Russia). The stalker (an achingly tormented performance by Alexander Kaidanovsky), whose shaven head and filthy, ill-fitting clothes seem clearly to denote the political prisoner, and his two companions, disillusioned intellectuals both, enter the Zone with the weary stealth of refugees; and, earlier, in the window of the stalker's bare apartment, is framed a vision not of Hell, but of earth *circa* 1980: the jagged, sooty silhouette of a factory disgorging its putrid fumes on to the sky and urinating unconcernedly into an oily, iridescent river. Such is the power of these filmic notes from the Gulag, the dissident underground and the ravages of 'ordinary Communism' that it matters less that they have been co-opted into allegorical science-fiction than that they are there at all, for the first time, on the screen.

Most disheartening, however, is the fact that the Zone, when finally breached, presents a scarcely more sanguine picture



'Stalker': Alexander Kaidanovsky.

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(one which is ironically emphasised by the film's belated conversion to colour). Whatever its thaumaturgical properties (at one point, the grass is seen gently to undulate), this post-nuclear landscape is, to put it bluntly, a dump, the Room a twin to that in the stalker's hovel. Vistas that had loomed green and inviting on the horizon turn out to be overrun by industrial detritus, and a lengthy pan along a polluted river bed uncovers an ugly trove of old coins, rusty metal pipes and, oddly, a syringe. Suddenly we find ourselves on no less shifting ground than the principals, as our perception of the Room's authenticity is simultaneously strengthened and undermined.

For whereas Tarkovsky's camera scrupulously respects the Zone's fantastical topography (panning in such a way as to confound our expectations of where the actors stand in relation to the terrain, framing the stalker's oval face upside down as it slowly rises from the river's edge like an obscene sting ray), the two trespassers do succeed in defying its laws at no apparent risk to themselves. (Wilfully, as when the writer, in a fit of impatience, takes a taboo direct route, and fortuitously, as when the scientist, having lost his way, is later discovered peacefully munching sandwiches and drinking tea from a thermos flask.) And we remember then how, despite bullets buzzing around them and glimpses of sinister frontier guards, the legendary difficulty of access to the Zone had already seemed almost a contrivance, a pretence of barring entry (when in reality a select few were being 'permitted' it) by which the state could perhaps foster the useful illusion of limited but just attainable freedom.

If I have concentrated on the film's visuals, it's because the philosophical debate engaged in by the three men on the threshold of the Room, concerning both the fragility of faith and its insidious authority, seems to me much its weakest element, as if even Tarkovsky had been frustrated by what, in the Soviet context, still can or cannot be said and had reverted to the kind of banal generalities of professional ethics versus cynicism, and humanistic idealisation of art ('unselfish compared to all other human activities,' says the writer) to be found in cautiously 'subversive' East European films, notably Zanussi's. More moving because more concrete is the direct interjection to the camera by the stalker's long-suffering wife, speaking sadly but quite matter-of-factly about their hardships together.

Though allegories are traditionally multilayered, there is usually one layer which, like a forced playing-card, subtly imposes itself. In *Stalker*, that particular one is, I believe, specifically political and hardly needs to be spelt out. In any case, given Tarkovsky's unique position (and one is dying to know the precise nature of the *modus operandi* arrived at between him and the Soviet establishment), the Western critic should learn to be as discreet as if he were reviewing a whodunit. □

'I pray to God he is an idiot'

The Elephant Man/John Pym



'The Elephant Man': Treves (second right) and a machine victim.

In 1884, the 'freak' John Merrick was discovered in a booth in the Mile End Road by Frederick Treves, chief surgeon at the London Hospital. *The Elephant Man* (Columbia-EMI-Warner), David Lynch's part-fantastic, part-factual reworking of the subsequent course of Merrick's life, accurately records that, after buying his temporary release, Treves' first act was to display the grossly deformed Merrick, an incurable victim of von Recklinghausen's disease, before another audience, the sober medical gentlemen of the teaching college at which he lectured on anatomy.

The film, which on one level at least may be said to proceed by the modern equivalent of a series of detailed, rather grandiose Victorian painted tableaux, carries Treves, with whom we are encouraged to identify, on a journey from shocked incomprehension ('I pray to God he is an idiot,' Treves observes with misplaced solicitude), through pity to compassion. In keeping with the moral tone of the world so fastidiously and effectively recreated (production design: Stuart Craig), the journey is in many ways remarkably straightforward. Lynch's key episodes—the first meeting between the nervous, well-drilled Merrick and the sceptically polite hospital governor; Merrick's teatime visit to the Treves' home, with the drawing-room mantelpiece adorned with photographs of the absent children—appeal to the heart with no sense that they are, in these cynical times, attempting an unfashionable feat. Indeed, the film as a whole succeeds in synthesising an old-fashioned, optimistic populism with a judiciously restrained streak of mysticism: a reflection of Lynch's privileged leap from *Eraserhead*, his first indepen-

dent feature, squarely into the lap of an 'industry' production company.

Installed in a side room at the London Hospital, Merrick slowly emerges from his body's shell and reveals himself not so much a wild child—though his keeper, with the fictional name of 'Bytes', treats him as such with a mixture of indifferent cruelty and the sort of maudlin sentimentality the Victorians reserved for kitchen dogs—as a *tabula rasa*. Approached with kindness, for reasons which range from the plain good-heartedness of the initially fearful nurse Nora to the matron Mrs Mothershead's sense of duty, John Merrick rapidly assumes the manners of the society he can only join by proxy; and these, because they are merely copied, slowly turn into a grotesque and perhaps, in the American director's view, ironically accurate parody.

The Elephant Man, filmed in black and white in the Panavision format, its tones reflecting a false certainty, holds up to judgment, in particular, two aspects of Victorian England. The notion, embroidered throughout, that industrial and medical progress will one day cure the world's ills is given the lie most effectively in an early, deliberately emblematic scene: Treves and a colleague are operating in primitively insanitary conditions on the victim of an industrial accident. 'We are seeing more and more of these accidents,' Treves says. Quite so, but if our knowledge of hygiene has improved, our control of our machines—and the film accents energy- and effluent-producing machines—has in a sense diminished.

Secondly, the representation of Merrick himself (played with a remarkably undemonstrative dignity by John Hurt)—with his head the size of a man's

THE ELEPHANT MAN ◦ SPECIAL TREATMENT

waist, his crooked mouth, useless right arm and body covered with lavalike eruptions—provokes complex questions about the nature of voyeurism, 'wonderment', and 'scientific' observation. The society beauties and titled couples who politely visit Merrick in his tiny room are in essence, it is intimated, really no different from the tipsy, gawking hordes, led by the plausibly contemporary porter (he seems, subjectively perhaps, notably contemporary for the depth of his heartlessness), who come at night to abuse the unprotected cripple.

Written by Lynch, Christopher de Vore and Eric Bergren, *The Elephant Man* is, however, chiefly a tale of an affliction borne, and of the growth of the sentimental—yet nevertheless moving—friendship between Merrick and Treves (Anthony Hopkins). At the end, before Merrick commits suicide knowing himself to be dying after the punishment of his recapture by Bytes, and wishing just once to lie flat in bed like an 'ordinary' person (an act which suffocates him), Treves acknowledges with a look that the man he had once wished an idiot in order that he should not comprehend the enormity of his body has in fact taught

him, as an equal, the value of friendship. Charity is icy without it.

The film delves, too, into the question of how the Victorians dealt with the unacceptable and the inexplicable. The former—like the slaving automatons that literally keep the hospital, and by extension society itself, functioning—are not so much hidden as invisibly to hand. The inexplicably 'inhuman'—'I cannot cure you,' Treves frankly admits to Merrick, thereby in a sense denying the basis of his calling—are filleted of their humanity and reclassified as dressed-up and mounted 'attractions'. Merrick's singularity, however, was that he was something more: the extent of his monstrosity placed him beyond the classifiable pale; he called into question the stability of even this new, post-Darwinian world.

In Lynch's Victorian society, John Merrick is—for all his almost palpable substance (and Christopher Tucker and Wally Schneiderman's make-up design and application are both real and ordinary)—a troubling, unknowable wraith. His longings, for friendship and acceptance, and his sentimental, childlike gratitude, for a silver walking-stick, a case of ivory toilet articles, for having a

beautiful mother who might still be proud of him (knowing he has friends like the settled Mr and Mrs Treves), disturbingly echo the spirit of the age. His optimism is both pathetic and demonstrably unfounded.

In a wider sense, perhaps, his life is a simple testimony to the power of theatre (or film) to metamorphose the mundane or the grotesque into something wholly mysterious. The doctors, awestruck by the sight of Merrick the 'specimen', are moved to hide their confusion by applauding Treves' 'showmanship'; and, in a framing sequence, the audience at the surreal pantomime—*Puss-in-Boots* played, it appears, among the stars—which Merrick attends with his almost-patroness Princess Alexandra are moved to applaud their own magnanimity in 'accepting' Merrick, for a moment, into their own closed society. Both audiences are curiously uncurious: creatures of reflex rather than reflection. The dying Merrick hears his mother's voice—'Nothing ever dies'—and the film-maker might be adding 'Particularly the fear and loathing of "monsters" whose appearance periodically compels us to question our normality.' □

A Suspicion of Good Works

Special Treatment/Tom Milne

Goran Paskaljević isn't the easiest filmmaker in the world to wax convincingly enthusiastic about. For one thing, Yugoslavian cinema has provided ample justification in the past for apprehensions of boredom. For another, Paskaljević's films tend to sound impossibly tedious, with plots which make you think you are about to be buttonholed by a zealous social worker.

In *The Earthly Days Keep Rolling*, for instance, a pensioner commits himself to an old people's home in the hope of companionship, only to find the place so inexpressibly gloomy that he has to start by livening things up. In *Special Treatment* (Cinegate), a doctor in charge of a state clinic for alcoholics is so delighted by the success of his new treatment that, ignoring rumbles of doubt among the patients themselves, he shepherds a group of star pupils round on a tour of factories to demonstrate the evils of drink.

Yet this shrinking suspicion in the face of good works is precisely what Paskaljević's films are about. The old people's home in *Earthly Days Keep Rolling* is by no means sinister: the rooms are bright and cheery, the staff helpful, the dining-room glittering with silver, white linen table-cloths, and even vases of flowers. But as the old man plucks a rose from his table and gallantly brightens one ancient lady's day by presenting it to her, illumination accompanies the gesture: comfort and kindness are as nothing compared to the acknowledgment that *I am I*, a person, not just another pensioner to be

tranquillised by statistically approved methods.

In *Special Treatment*, Paskaljević returns to the same theme with greater complexity and a bizarre wit that is constantly pulling carpets from under the audience's feet. Our first pratfall comes with the opening sequence. It is night, and the hauntingly empty hulk of a railway station fills the screen, its erratically illuminated windows and waiting-rooms seemingly cut out of the darkness with nothing but emptiness beyond. Like a plangent voice of destiny from a Carné-Prévert movie, a lottery vendor can be heard hawking his wares. A few lost souls stroll about or simply sit waiting. And as the train thunders into the station, an Anna Karenina drinking in solitary desolation runs out to hurl herself into its path.

'Stop! Stop!' cries a voice, and we instantly cut to the same scene, this time re-enacted in front of a painted backdrop with the cast fumbling and complaining as the director of the clinic rehearses them in a psychodrama constructed out of their unhappy pasts. Plunged back into the real world, we begin to learn something of the prosaic truth behind these alcoholic lives—the ageing whore, the stammering actor, the woman deprived of her children—only to find ourselves being irresistibly drawn back through the looking-glass along twin paths of fantasy.

In one, the well-meaning doctor, whose own private life is in an evident shambles, dedicatedly pursues the treatment he has developed, which he is convinced

will cure everybody's ills, and which turns out to involve a mind-boggling course in apple-eating, listening to Wagner, and roaming the pastoral scene flapping your arms like a bird. Inculcating habits of diet, discipline and free relaxation, it might just possibly work—who knows?—as it seems to have worked on the patients he has selected for his demonstrations. But in the other looking-glass avenue, these same patients are beginning to regret the freedoms they have exchanged in return for liberation from their enslavement to alcohol. It would take a scene-by-scene description of the film to evoke the subtle process whereby—with the Wagner music inviting subversive political interpretations through its assertion of the sovereignty of private passions on the one hand, and its association with authoritarian impulses on the other—Paskaljević demonstrates that even in the best of all possible worlds, an even better one may yet be dreamed.

To put it crudely and inadequately, there is the doctor who decrees that his patients cannot function usefully if they drink (but who can himself indulge in private because he commands self-control), and there is the actor who knows that he can only function properly if he does drink. A simple enough statement of the social condition, even when fully orchestrated in the film. But the delight of *Special Treatment* is the quirkishly deadpan (almost Keatonish) sense of humour Paskaljević demonstrates throughout. Unthinkably suggesting that alcoholic bliss might conceivably be preferable to sober industry, *Special Treatment* comes full circle to intimate that perhaps the Prévert poetry of the opening sequence is closer to reality than anything else. □

FILM REVIEWS

Remembering Louis Armstrong

Stardust Memories/John Pym

Consider two scenes. In a seaside town in New York State, where he has been persuaded to embellish a season of his old, 'funny' films, the director Sandy Bates (Woody Allen) breaks off a private discussion on the meaning of *Bicycle Thieves*: he imagines seeing himself, a boy magician, having just conjured an elephant in the middle of an expanse of empty beach. On another beach, in Italy, the no more decisive director Guido Anselmi is nudged back into what one takes to be an episode from his 'real' youth: a mountainous woman appears from a pillbox and dances suggestively before the captivated boy.

While *Stardust Memories* (United Artists), in which the first scene occurs, is on the surface at least an imitative tribute to Fellini's *8½*, which contains the second, Woody Allen, its director and scriptwriter, may not in fact have had La Saraghina directly in mind when he conceived the elephant. The elephant is nevertheless instructive and significant. Examining his past, Fellini was able to stand outside himself: one understands both the boy's fascination and La Saraghina's sense of her own teasingly lecherous power. Allen, conversely, prefers to stop short, to avoid penetrating the boy magician's mind, to banish his ghosts with a deprecating joke, or in this case a startling sight gag.

That, at least, is part of the story. If it is a homage to European sophistication, and to a director supposedly better able to adapt his own life to 'artistic' ends, *Stardust Memories* is wholly its own. Throughout his career, Allen has taken as a constant the amorous entanglements of the character he has impersonated: with none of his women, however, has he quite managed to hit matters off. In *Stardust Memories*, its title suggesting a worldwide, half-ironic sentimentality, the women—and their numbers grow—prey or in some cases are preyed upon: Sandy's old and current girlfriends, a possible future lover, an adorably importunate fan, his mother, his sister, an abstracted amanuensis (played by Allen's former wife and co-star, the uncredited Louise Lasser). The women, complex, sharply and invariably affectionately observed, are here the fabric of the plot. And they are, as usual, more interesting than the man around whom they revolve.

The studio executives fret over the direction of Sandy's new film, a clip from which opens the film proper: trapped on a train, Sandy (playing 'himself') looks frantically at the Oscar-clutching revelers across the tracks in another carriage; he later meets them wandering beside a rubbish tip. The executives, it transpires, are determined to recut this (parodic) movie; first, however, Sandy has to be packed off to the Stardust Hotel, where he is beset by a multitude of begging admirers, none of whom he can bring

himself to reject outright, their uniformly off-centre, unpretty features mirroring, perhaps, his own self-image, and their over-seriousness his own denied pretensions.

There is no plot to speak of, and Anselmi's bravura moment of artistic self-discovery is matched with a bathetic, imagined killing, followed by the 'dead' Sandy's description (a typical Allen epiphany) of his one moment of complete happiness with his former girlfriend, with Louis Armstrong's 'Stardust' on the gramophone. The film's singularity, however, stems largely from the ease with which past and present, reality and fantasy, are interwoven. (For the supposedly complete auteurist director, Allen again owes a great deal to his crew. The editor, here as on *Manhattan*, is Susan E. Morse.)

It is not that Allen, through Sandy this time, has come measurably closer to bringing into focus the 'meaning' of his life and work (though this is a subject on which his character is happy to expatiate), but rather that the ways he has found of putting this off have become increasingly complex, at the same time as the character himself has become if anything less frenetically and more 'seriously' naive. Why should this matter? Partly because Allen's candour, which never appears to stale, and his sense of humour, his timing never fails, are for all his selfishness so innocently unselfish. Whatever one may think of *Bicycle Thieves*, it is impossible not to warm, in some degree, to anyone who can

in 1980 launch himself wholeheartedly into a discussion of its merits.

The subtlety of *Stardust Memories* may be pointed up by another comparison. The boy magician who crops up throughout (and who is played by a youth whose surname is shared by the boy who played young Alvy Singer in *Annie Hall*) is viewed with a genuine sense that he comes from a mystical country to which the adult Sandy cannot return. Young Alvy Singer, on the other hand, was merely a plant: someone to be conjured at will, and to whose world the adult Alvy could effortlessly return. The elephant on the beach is only an elephant, yet—although it is not used with such suggestive imagination as Fellini's mountainous woman—it does set off reverberations, so skilfully brief is its appearance, which makes it more than just a sight gag.

Allen's theme is Sandy's attempt to shoulder the burden of public expectations, how to deal with the public's desire that his work remain the same, and how to achieve some sort of peace of mind. He fails, but—as in *Manhattan*—without a sense that the campaign is over. Isobel (Marie-Christian Barrault), who has left her husband and arrived at the Stardust with two unruly children, leaves when he wakes up after the imagined shooting with another woman's name on his lips. His old flame, the unstable Dorrie (a handsome performance by Charlotte Rampling), over whose treatment he is fitfully remorseful, is periodically conjured to haunt him. And his current fancy, the orchestral violinist Daisy (Jessica Harper), is as patently unsuitable, and as patently tough and attractive, as any heterosexual male Manhattanite might imagine. She fades out of his life after the shooting in a manner which might seem careless if it were not so obviously right. She will return, one feels, or rather—like Dorrie, Isobel, Sandy's attractively ordinary sister and his long-suffering mother—she will never really be away.

In *Stardust Memories*, filmed by Gordon Willis in soft black-and-white tones, and designed by Allen's collaborator Mel Bourne (Sandy's apartment is papered with not large but immense emblematic blow-ups), one feels Allen putting the 'genre' *Manhattan* films behind him and, having assimilated the barren lessons of *Interiors*, entering unmistakably new territory. Some may sense the growth of an increasingly private cinema: here Sandy relates a dire joke—a favourite which, he says, he has put in all his pictures and then always cut—in the guise of a non-joke joke. Others, myself included, a sense of growing assurance. The extra-terrestrials with whom Sandy briefly disputes in a fantasy sequence at the end of the film (he has wound up at a UFO congress, capped by the arrival of three magisterial hot-air balloons) might have seemed incongruously misplaced. That they do not says much for one's genial familiarity with the popular landscape of the director's kindly, worrisome mind. □



Sandy and the unruly children.



'Caught on a Train': In the Frankfurt opera house.

'You're a nice boy in many ways'

Caught on a Train/Tom Milne

Surviving a moment's incipient alarm as an inspector hesitates over his ticket at the Ostend barrier, a young man (Michael Kitchen) hurries to the waiting Vienna express, studiously ignoring the gang of noisy German students who rush past and the rude little girl who sticks her tongue out at him. A publisher's assistant, he is self-importantly off to deal with distinguished authors at a book fair in Linz.

On board, making his way to his seat along the deserted corridors, he suspends his worries (*why* is the train so empty—could it be the wrong one?) just long enough to strike up acquaintance with a pretty girl (Wendy Raebeck) who has the seat opposite his. Firmly entrenched in the window seats, they glare at the faces that look blankly in, giggling happily as they pass on. Nevertheless the compartment begins to fill, and the young man is abruptly confronted by a determined old lady (Peggy Ashcroft), speaking a *pot pourri* of languages but evidently Viennese beneath her chic furs and matching toque, insisting against all the evidence of tickets and reservations that *this* must be her seat because she *asked* for a place by the window.

With deceptive ease, *Caught on a Train* (BBC-TV) establishes its keynote right from this opening sequence: the sense of insecurity that must haunt even the most seasoned traveller, far from home on a train that just might inexplicably reroute him to some unimaginable elsewhere, and certainly leaves him prey to such fancies as ladies who vanish and strangers proposing an exchange of murders.

Obviously keenly aware of the refer-

ence point, Stephen Poliakoff, author of this marvellous telefilm, and Peter Duffell, the director who serves him so beautifully, gleefully play the Hitchcock game along with the imbroglio of embarrassments which has the old lady sweetly badger the young man into almost missing the train while collecting magazines for her, and then fighting a stout rear-guard action on behalf of his right to smoke in a smoking compartment.

There is the suavely bearded fat man, all alone with the blinds drawn in the next compartment. The sinister stranger wagging his finger in admonition over the only vacant table in the buffet car. The moment of shock as he returns to his compartment to find an entirely new set of faces, and even his luggage gone.

But like most of the mysteries he encounters (or conjures), there is a ready explanation: it is bedtime, and his fellow-travellers have simply moved to their sleeping compartments. And although his nightmare mounts to an entirely credible crescendo, with the rowdy Germans boiling up to a bottle-fight in the corridor and himself being hauled off the train under arrest as a suspected terrorist, the old lady is always on hand to guide him back to daylight and reason. The old man in the next sleeper is not really dead, just hard to wake; and a missing passenger, last heard enigmatically muttering about his own imminent disappearance, simply got off at the last stop.

Caught on a Train, in fact, establishes impeccable Hitchcock credentials while busily nurturing another ace in the hole in the person of Peggy Ashcroft's egregious Frau Messner, who even provides the film's real McGuffin in the

shape of her Mysteriously Disappearing Chicken Legs. These eventually prove to have been annexed for consumption in his sleeper by the man in the fishing-hat (Michael Sheard in the bluff Basil Radford role), Frau Messner's chief ally in her running battle with the young man. But the point is, even as she insinuates that the young man must have stolen the chicken legs since they couldn't have *flown* away, she is repeatedly bewailing that there they were, in her basket, a picnic cooked in breadcrumbs and specially packed for her in silver paper.

Suggesting vague fleets of faithful retainers attending to her every comfort, the chicken legs are part of a mystique, a dream of past glories which one gathers ended with the Nazi era ('My brothers were all in the Party ... I didn't really enjoy those days'), to be succeeded by a sad time of growing old: 'I read a lot of long books. It was very quiet, all by myself'.

She may be lying, of course, just as it may not really be true that she is dying. She is, after all, the archetypal public pest, ineffably infuriating in the way she pushes herself at everyone and into everything. Yet there is an urgency in her to which the girl responds, as she tries to explain in telling the young man why she gave up the corner seat to which he so stubbornly clung: 'Because she needed it so badly'.

It is this need which is the silent protagonist in the film's funniest sequence where, having obviated all possibility of getting anything to eat in the buffet car by her imperious impatience, she whisks the young man off to a haven of food during a half-hour stop at Frankfurt. A tortuous trail, accompanied by much anxious watch-checking, along endless corridors, up escalators and out into the streets to the opera house and a reward of one small cake apiece, then back along the nervous trail to find the train gone (but only to another platform). A wickedly funny scene, but also oddly moving as, sublimely confident that the train would not dare leave without her, Frau Messner insists on staying to catch part of the last act of *Der Rosenkavalier*. Suddenly, there in the opera house with the music conjuring Vienna in its days of splendour, the youth that she has been so vainly trying to capture is present again.

It speaks volumes for Peggy Ashcroft's superlative performance (with Michael Kitchen not so very far behind) that our transference from his side to hers is effected almost subliminally. 'You're a nice boy in many ways,' she says to him in final dismissal, 'but you don't really care, do you, except about success in your work?' This is, one realises for the first time, an astonishingly accurate perception of the character he has displayed throughout beneath the easy charm; and suddenly the urgent need becomes his as, achieving illumination too late, he is left alone (no doubt with a future of many long books to be read), offering a wistful appeal; 'Don't you want to know my name?' □

BOOK REVIEWS

Informers

NAMING NAMES

by Victor S. Navasky

The Viking Press,
New York/\$15.95

Since the departure of Hanns Eisler and Bert Brecht for East Germany in 1947 as the first, and possibly the most distinguished, victims of the House Un-American Activities Committee investigation of Hollywood, a small library has grown up on this aspect of what later came to be called McCarthyism.

The first book was the disingenuous left-wing polemic *Hollywood on Trial* by the subsequently black-listed screenwriter Gordon Kahn, and it carried a commendation from Thomas Mann, then a local resident, who saw signs of a burgeoning totalitarianism similar to the one that had driven him into exile. The largest is Eric Bentley's hefty selection of extracts from HUAC hearings, *Thirty Years of Treason*, which appeared in 1971 shortly after a much subdued committee had adopted the less tendentious title 'Committee on Internal Security'.

The most famous, and among younger readers most influential, is Lillian Hellman's brief memoir *Scoundrel Time*, a book of great interest as personal testimony, though of dubious value as social history. Of the wave of books produced in the mid-1970s (the sober studies by Stefan Kanfer and Robert Vaughn among them), Miss Hellman's is the only one to reach this country. Now we have what is by some way the best thing written on the subject, Victor S. Navasky's *Naming Names*, a work that painstakingly trims the overgrown hedgerows of this apparently amorphous area to reveal a negotiable maze. The author, now editor of the radical weekly *The Nation* and formerly a *New York Times* reporter, comes formidably armed to the task. He is a graduate of Yale Law School, a co-founder of the satirical magazine *Monocle*, an investigative journalist who spent five years researching *Kennedy Justice* (1971), a trenchant account of the administration of the law when Bobby Kennedy was Attorney-General, and has spent eight years on this book, talking to nearly as many people as HUAC itself. His interest in the cinema is that of a well-informed amateur moviegoer, and he's altogether less patronising and scornful than previous writers, even being capable of going behind that old sneer 'swimming-pool communists' to provide a sympathetic reading of Hollywood values.

Navasky's subject is the informer, and after a consideration of the nark's problematical historical role from Calvary to My

Lai, he zeroes in on Hollywood for a variety of reasons. One is that nobody in the movie colony had any secrets to sell, and as we now know there are by general agreement not more than half a dozen examples of Communist Party influence on the product of the big studios, and they're risible things like Lionel Stander whistling the Internationale while waiting for a lift, and a merchant seaman (Dane Clark voicing John Howard Lawson's script in *Battle of the North Atlantic*) on a World War II Murmansk convoy describing a Russian fighter as 'one of ours'. Another is that despite the apparently small personal threat to those concerned, the Hollywood witnesses yielded per capita the greatest number of informants ready to name names of any area HUAC investigated. Then the effects of the immediate enquiries and their aftermath are more easily discernible, and related to this the events have peculiarly dramatic and emblematic qualities.

Navasky breaks down the excuses for collaboration with the Committee into four categories—'I didn't hurt anyone', 'They deserved what they got', 'I wasn't responsible for my activities', and 'I was acting in obedience to higher loyalties'. None of these lacks a philosophical, ethical or political basis, and the central section of the book, in which such co-operative witnesses as Budd Schulberg, Robert Rossen and Isobel Lennart (author of comedies and musicals from *Anchors Aweigh!* to *Funny Girl*, who was persuaded to co-operate by her liberal anti-communist husband) are permitted to present their own case, contains much sound argument, though ultimately it fails to convince.

Moreover Navasky does not minimise the American Communist Party's contribution to the prevailing 'ecology of suspicion'. He agrees to some extent with the writer-director Roy Huggins, who says in partial defence of reneging on old comrades that he was 'appalled by the [Hollywood Ten's] lack of candour because they all pretended to be Jeffersonian Democrats and weren't.' And in a concluding section called 'Lessons' he argues that 'mystification whether by informer or resister is the enemy of enlightenment.' But we cannot but conclude that those who gave evidence about their own past and went through the ritual of naming names were betraying themselves and their friends for no clearly defensible cause, and that in doing so they damaged the fabric of their society.

HUAC of course knew far more about the Californian CP than the Party itself knew: the Los Angeles police department had highly placed agents within the Party from 1928 onwards. The hearings were in fact, as Navasky suggests, borrowing a term from social

anthropologists, 'Degradation Ceremonies' fuelled by moral indignation, and a necessary part of the process was for the witness to debase himself by denouncing his past and betraying old allegiances. In discussing this area, the author suggests, we've concentrated on rights and ignored rites.

While the investigations were going on, there was an attempt to turn the informer into a cultural hero, where formerly he had been the subject of obloquy. Someone suggested quite seriously that a medal be instituted for informers to recognise their gallantry as equal to that of soldiers on the battlefield. In *On the Waterfront* (a key movie for Navasky), three prominent collaborators, Elia Kazan, Budd Schulberg and Lee J. Cobb, provided a defence for their role to set against the classic pre-war indictment in Ford's *The Informer*. He might well have pointed to *The Molly Maguires* (1970) as a milestone marking the black-listed artists' final rehabilitation, for there the once proscribed director Martin Ritt and writer Walter Bernstein make their undercoverman-informer a traitor in the old mould. They were later to collaborate on *The Front*, the only Hollywood picture so far (unless one includes *The Way We Were*) to confront black-listing head on.

Ironically, as the ceremonies later developed, the victims and villains changed roles. The people who eventually suffered most, personally and socially, were the informers. Those who defied the Committee emerged from their privations often physically impaired but with their dignity intact and having achieved a certain serenity. Dalton Trumbo, best known of the initial victims and first of the 'Hollywood Ten' to receive a major credit after the thaw of the late 1950s, was later to write that 'there are only victims'. A fellow-member of the Ten (and a sharper analytic mind), Albert Maltz, countered with the less charitable 'to understand all is not to forgive all'. Navasky in effect chairs an illuminating debate between Maltz and Trumbo.

It is the firm philosophical grasp and the form Navasky imposes on the subject that give his book its force. But this should not obscure the fact that it contains a deal of original material, and not least a few pages on the identity of a figure previously thought of as 'part of the paranoid folklore of the old left'. For years there have been rumours and stories about a Californian psychiatrist who specialised in Party members and ex-Communists. It was said that he not only prepared the latter to be informers but also that he was in league with the FBI. Now Navasky has tracked down one Philip Cohen, who now teaches photography at an art institute in Santa Barbara. His story is bizarre indeed.

A psychology graduate of Chicago University, Cohen came to the West Coast in 1937, joined the Party and became the Hollywood therapist to whom the Party entrusted its disturbed celebrities, not wishing to put them into the hands of orthodox Freudians. Sterling Hayden, Lloyd Bridges, John Garfield and Dorothy Compton were numbered among his roster of famous patients, and he himself was something of a star, compared by Navasky to the shrink in Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*. When too many of his clients collaborated, his business fell off and he had to supplement his income working as a uniformed detective in a county sheriff's office outside Los Angeles. Cohen denies ever working for the FBI, but regularly attended football games with a leading HUAC investigator. 'He was,' says Navasky, 'a master of manipulation operating at the murky crossroads where the mystique of Freud meets the mystique of Marx. What makes this fantastic character interesting and significant is that he was regarded as part of the landscape.'

PHILIP FRENCH

Crime Still Pays

CRIME MOVIES

by Carlos Clarens

Secker & Warburg/\$7.95

FILM NOIR

edited by Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward

Secker & Warburg/£15.00

Commenting on *Dead End* and the metaphorical juxtaposition which has rich men's terraces overlooking lower depths tenements, Carlos Clarens notes the camera's penchant for low-angle shots of the characters, in particular Humphrey Bogart and his sidekick, dominated by the oppressive structures of the city:

'Yet Bogart himself moves and acts within the vast constricting decor as impervious to social comment as to the far-fetched artiness of *The Petrified Forest*. At this stage in his career he could still play a mean character, but it was a meanness that lacked the metaphysical resonance of, say, Ciannelli's Trock in *Winterset*. The hopefulness, the reformism of the New Deal first had to fade before Bogart could come into his own as a major popular hero; the world of the private eye—in which he would find his most natural habitat—had to be beyond improvement or repair. The hero of *Casablanca* had survived the hard time and doomed crusades of the thirties, and he could humorously caution the

BOOK REVIEWS

Nazis against invading a New York turf like that of *Dead End* where he had served time.'

This thumbnail sketch of Bogart's persona, trailing the complex evolution it underwent along with the crime movie from the heyday of the gangster to the *film noir* 40s, is Carlos Clarens at his best. Perceptive, acutely aware of the multiple forces determining the development of any cinematic trend, he makes *Crime Movies* as readable and rewarding as his earlier *Horror Movies*. Why, for instance, did the serial—imported from France, where it featured arch-fiendish anarchist criminals—suddenly become exclusively oriented towards heroines in peril in a string of alliterative titles like *The Exploits of Elaine*, *The Hazards of Helen*, *The Mysteries of Myra* and *Dolly of the Dailies*? Because white slavery was the American paranoia of 1910, culminating in the passing of the Mann Act and a whole string of sensational adventures exploiting 'gypsies, wogs, redskins, or Orientals, racist stereotypes whose machinations were usually tinged with sexual threat.'

The main problem with Clarens' book, which has no filmography, is that the vast scope of the subject inevitably results in the erection of artificial boundaries. The gentle art of murder, for example, is tacitly assumed to lie outside the scope of 'crime movies' when the motive is passion rather than profit, so that films as varied and as relevant to the context as *Christmas Holiday*, *Strangers on a Train* and *Klute* are elided entirely. Equally inevitably, there are omissions even within the plan of the book. Mamoulian's *City Streets* surely rates a mention as Al Capone's favourite film, the one in which gangland killings are engineered offscreen so that the boss can display clean hands; so does Fuller's *House of Bamboo*, for its carefully detailed deployment of the gang as a military unit.

On the other hand, Clarens unearths some fascinating byways, such as *The Story of Temple Drake*, the 1933 adaptation of Faulkner's *Sanctuary* which was so badgered into subterfuge by censorship that it became a *film noir* before its time which 'succeeded in creating its own run-down world of oversexed heroines, demon lovers, half-wits, prostitutes and poor-white moonshiners.' Or Roger Touhy, *Gangster!* (1944), a forgotten film directed by Robert Florey which pioneered the semi-factual exposé techniques that were to become so fashionable.

And in tracing the development of crime movies through the 30s and 40s to the accompaniment of a fascinating commentary on the way the FBI itself became a major influence through interference, Clarens manages to drive a film like Walsh's *High Sierra*, gen-

erally assumed to be something of a maverick, back into the fold. When the gangster gave way to the G-Man under pressure from the FBI in the mid-30s, there was a brief vogue borrowed from Broadway for 'the existential gangster, a lonely, passive figure who took on the pathos of a threatened species.' Appearing festooned with literary pretensions in *Winterset*, *The Petrified Forest* and *Dead End*, this existential figure quickly died a natural death, only to be reborn in purely cinematic terms four years later: 'High Sierra, equating the thirties gangster with the frontier badman and the doomed man of the soil, was a turning point that left behind the last innocents and opened the way to the great neurotics of modern cinema.'

High Sierra, in a sense, heralded the imminence of the *film noir* cycle. And as Clarens points out, an important factor in the development of the *film noir*, which 'had its roots in pre-war literature and eschewed the realities of postwar crime', was that the Code seal would have been refused to any film attempting to portray a real-life gangster. Only *Dillinger* (1945), a poverty-row quickie that took the risk of refusal of a seal, slipped in under the net until *Baby Face Nelson*, shot in 19 days and released before anybody could notice, reopened the floodgates in 1957.

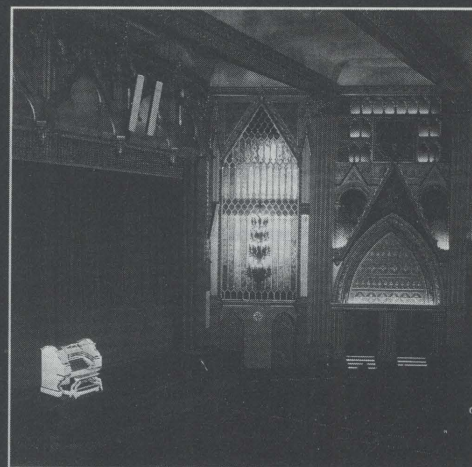
One looks in vain for similar insights or historical awareness in *Film Noir*. This is basically a coffee-table book for film courses which borrows the M.F.B. format to provide credits, plot synopses and reviews (by seventeen different writers) for some three hundred films that might loosely be described as parading under the *film noir* banner. A 6-page introduction makes all the right noises about low-key visuals, referring dutifully to *Black Mask* and the *série noire* novels, but offering no very illuminating definition of the subject.

In his admirably concise and evocative pages on the *film noir*, Clarens offers a wise caveat: 'In American films, any pessimistic implication was usually more than tempered with exhilarating physical action and uplifting strings on the soundtrack. True metaphysical anguish was likewise outside the range of Hammett, Chandler, Cain and David Goodis, and beyond their concern. Even at its bleakest, the *film noir* can be comfortably assigned to the middle ground of the crime story, and only the naive or the insecure would rank Céline and Sartre among *série noire* authors...'

Naively and insecurely, the writers of *Film Noir* blindly follow the lead given by the introduction's references to Camus, falling back on vague terms like 'existential' when in doubt. Time and again the individual reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

reveal a sorry ignorance of historical facts and literary sources.

Films like *Ride the Pink Horse* and *The Night Has a Thousand Eyes* are enthusiastically approved without hint of the fact that any good qualities they may have are due to the source novels, by Dorothy Hughes and Cornell Woolrich respectively, both of them being atrociously butchered in the process of adaptation. Vaguely approving references are made to several of the 'pulp' writers who provided the framework and basic blueprint for the *film noir*, but almost invariably from a standpoint of ignorance.

I Wake Up Screaming (Hot Spot), for instance, is described as 'an example of the developing *film noir* style in the early stages of the cycle', while Steve Fisher's source novel is said to be of interest chiefly for 'its insider's view of Hollywood.' In fact this 'insider's' view is no more informed than countless others. The interest of the novel lies rather in that Fisher based his detective Ed Cornell (played by Laird Cregar in the film) on a

word portrait of Cornell Woolrich, whose role as one of the founding fathers of *film noir* is celebrated by a darkly obsessive plot in which Ed Cornell, dying of consumption, hopelessly in love with the heroine, vengefully hounds her boy-friend for a murder he is only too aware the latter did not commit. An archetypal *film noir* situation rather than a developing one, except that the film watered down the plot.

Even as a reference work, containing admirably detailed credits, *Film Noir* has to be taken with a pinch of salt. 'Louis de Feuillade' must be turning in his grave. The plot synopsis of *The Big Carnival (Ace in the Hole)* leaves Charles Tatum on top of the world, with no reference to his comeuppance at the point of a knife. Doc Riedenschneider, Humbert Humbert's nymphetomane rival in *The Asphalt Jungle*, would doubtless be surprised to learn that he was 'captured when he stops to look wistfully at a group of farm-hands.' Etc. etc.

TOM MILNE

Serendipity

THE GUINNESS BOOK OF FILM FACTS AND FEATS

by Patrick Robertson

Guinness Superlatives/£8.95

Guinness is good for anyone with a liking for far-fetched, recondite and often fairly non-essential scraps of information. There is probably no one who actually needs to know about the longest film ever made (if the source is to be believed it was called *The Longest Most Meaningless Movie in the World*, achieved a screening in Paris in 1970, and ran for 48 hours); the film which employed 'the largest cast of dwarves and midgets' (*The Wizard of Oz*, which managed to muster 116 of them); or the curious fact that the 'the largest number of films set in an English provincial city is 19, in Liverpool.' But the attraction of the Guinness books is in the generally urbane, unsurprised manner and the impression of effortless authority—no doubt there are mistakes, as in all such compendiums, but assertions such as the one about Liverpool are unlikely to find many challengers.

The book contains, of course, plenty of plain facts; such as the statistic, always worth remembering, that the North American continent accounts for a mere 6 per cent of the world's film production, against 33 per cent for Europe and the USSR. But plain facts can be found elsewhere, and

although they are handily set out, the book's genuine value is in its less accessible information. Take, for instance, the rather surprising statement that the world's most filmed novelist is still Edgar Wallace, whom one might have thought long since supplanted. Not so; he remains out alone at the head of the field, with 132 titles to Dumas' 118 and Zane Grey's 103. Dickens, at 98, is just coming up to his century. Or, if one wants a really obscure and intriguing piece of literary information, there is the title of the first novel to contain a reference to the cinema: E. F. Benson's *Mammon and Co.*, 1899. With a flourish, however, the book discovers a magazine story of 1898 by a lady named Mrs Henry Mansergh, which was actually titled 'An Idyll of the Cinematograph' and would seem to have featured the first private detective to take clandestine movies.

More oddities: Liverpool in 1914 boasted a cinema called the Cabbage; the first in-flight movie was *The Lost World*, shown during an Imperial Airways flight in April 1925; and the first film society in Britain was not the one we always supposed it to be, but the Stoll Picture Theatre Club, inaugurated in 1918 by Baroness Orczy and with a film scripted by her. Perhaps the most engaging character recorded in an engaging and useful volume is the British exhibitor who in 1907 told the *Kinematograph Weekly* that he liked to cut the titles and company trademarks off the films he screened. 'I prefer,' he wrote, 'to foster the harmless deception that all have been made by myself, which adds to the respect paid to the show.'

PENELOPE HOUSTON

LETTERS

Peeping Tom

SIR,—My attention has been drawn to an article in your periodical by one David Thomson, entitled 'Mark of the Red Death'.

I would like to point out that in this absurd article and on page 260, you have used a still photograph of myself in the part of the Newsagent in *Peeping Tom* with a caption identifying me as Michael Powell, the director of the film. Quite apart from the fact that I hardly relish being represented as a cryptosadist, the accusation that I am Michael Powell does me serious harm professionally.

I shall, however, not take this matter further, if you print this letter in your next issue in refutation of the attribution you have made.

Yours faithfully,
BARTLETT MULLINS
London, N.12.

Apologies to Bartlett Mullins and to Michael Powell, whose hand we detect in this letter, for a foolish error in captioning.

EDITOR

A Woman of Paris

SIR,—In my article on Charles Chaplin's *Woman of Paris*, the title of the Jean de Limur film with Jeanne Eagels appears (thanks to a misreading of my handwriting) as *The Lake*. It should in fact be *The Letter*.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID ROBINSON
London, E.C.1.

Star System

SIR,—I was very sorry to see that you have radically altered (if not practically abandoned) the star system of ratings which have been an important feature of SIGHT AND SOUND for as long as I care to remember. I do hope you will think twice before you allow the new format 'On Now' to become permanent.

As a guide to current films, your use of the star system left a great impact on the memory and even to this day I can visualise your ratings of individual films as far back as the late 50s; something which has kept the historical perspective so alive and visually retentive.

Yours faithfully,
M. J. CASSIDY
Dublin.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JILL FORBES teaches French at Loughborough University ... JEREMY ISAACS has been appointed Chief Executive of the Fourth Channel ... VLADIMIR B. MATUSEVICH is Senior Staff commentator with the Russian Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty based in Munich ... PAUL MAYERSBERG, who scripted *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, is at present working on a new film project with Nicolas Roeg.

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COLUMBIA-EMI-WARNER for *The Elephant Man*, *The Shining*. 20th CENTURY-FOX for *Kagemusha*, photograph of Werner Herzog.

UNITED ARTISTS for *Stardust Memories*, *A Fistful of Dynamite*, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.

ITC for *Being There*.

ARTIFICIAL EYE for *Sauve qui peut (La Vie)*, *The Travelling Players*.

CINEGATE for *The Conductor*, *Konstanz*, *Special Treatment*. CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *Stalker*, *Yesterday Girl*.

ENTERPRISE PICTURES for *Atlantic City*.

GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Mon Oncle d'Amérique*.

PARLON PRODUCTIONS for *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

CHAMPION/CONCORDIA for *Once Upon a Time in the West*.

EDGAR REITZ/KRDF for *Mahlzeiten*.

PETER HERZOG PRODUCTIONS for *Signs of Life*.

ROB HOUWER FILMS for *Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern*, *Tätowierung*.

LISSAR FILM GROUP for *The Ballad of Tara*.

RAI/ZDF/ANGELOPOULOS PRODUCTIONS for *O Megalexandros*.

GEORGE PAPALIOS PRODUCTIONS for *Days of '36*.

ANGELOPOULOS PRODUCTIONS/INA for *The Huntsmen*.

SEMIOTIS PRODUCTIONS for *The Reconstruction*.

INA (Paris)/SONIMAGE (Grenoble) for *Sur et sous la communication*, *France/Tour/Détour/Deux/Enfants*. Stills taken from the frame by Erich Sargeant.

BBC-TV for *Caught on a Train*.

LONDON WEEKEND TELEVISION for photograph of Ermanno Olmi.

NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL for *Following Angels*, *Time In Between*, *Never Say Die*, *Shadowplay*, *The Tumour Principle*, *Looking in the Fridge for Feelings*.

EDINBURGH FILM FESTIVAL for photograph of Lynda Myles.

BFI PRODUCTION BOARD for *At the Fountainhead (Of German Strength)*, *Brothers and Sisters*, *Exchange and Divide*, *The Falls*, *Travellers*.

CINEMATHEQUE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE for *La Poison*, *Faisons un Rêve*, *Le Comédien*.

NFA STILLS COLLECTION for *Remontons les Champs-Élysées*, *Si Versailles m'était conté*.

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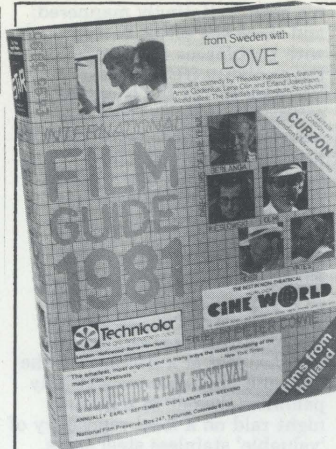
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ON NOW

●BABYLON (Osiris)

Franco Rosso charts the life under pressure of a group of black working-class youths in a seductive fashion. The performances are uniformly excellent, and Dennis Bovell's reggae score bounces, bleeps and pulsates round Chris Menges' superb photography. But the film is crucially flawed by its tendency to sketch rather than analyse problems, often with dangerously reactionary results. Racism is always seen in terms of personal oppression and alienation, a problem for the working class rather than one inflicted on them, to which the (significantly) all-boys-together gang respond with likeable rascality, good humour and soulful stoicism. Pointers to violent confrontation are ultimately the film's only way out of its own impasse. (Brinsley Forde, Trevor Laird.)

●DRESSED TO KILL (ITC)

Writer-director Brian De Palma's latest well-oiled, half-comic shocker—homicidal transvestite maniac is tracked down in Manhattan by a notably wholesome hooker (the director's wife, Nancy Allen) and teenage electronics wizard (Keith Gordon)—trails its clues with none of the bizarre, inexplicable touches which so distinguished *The Fury*. The by now obligatory fragments of Hitchcockiana which decorate the plot (in the opening sequence, Angie Dickinson soaps in a shower but is *not* killed by the man who seizes her from behind) are of less interest than the film's occasional visual surprises: a snaking track round an art gallery in which the soon-to-be-murdered Dickinson plays hide-and-seek with a man she is trying and trying not to pick up. The cinema of the games room. (Michael Caine, Dennis Franz.)

●THE STUNT MAN (Fox)

Made and marketed in the teeth of heavy front-office opposition to become a surprise hit in America, Richard Rush's 'existentialist' view of movie-making begins with some joyous sleight-of-hand that deceives the audience as much as its hero. On the run from the police, a young Vietnam veteran (Steve Railsback) slips through the looking-glass into a film being shot on location; unaware of the change and inadvertently causing the death of a stunt man, he finds himself taking the dead man's place for an eventual re-enactment of his death scene. Juggling Chinese boxes with superb skill, Rush persuasively demonstrates how a film-maker, as purveyor and dispeller of illusions, plays God. But the film-maker playing God here is unfortunately Peter O'Toole at

his most irritatingly mannered; and since the script is crammed with portentous lines nudging the audience (returning from Vietnam to kill the friend who screwed him in business and marriage, the hero must learn to love his fellows), the film gradually expires of a rush of significance to the head. (Barbara Hershey.)

●THAT SINKING FEELING (GTO)

In bleak, sodden Glasgow, an undernourished youth (Robert Buchanan) strikes out against the prospect of a lifetime on the dole and organises his similarly penniless friends in a dashing night raid on a local repository of 'valuable' stainless steel sinks. Bill Forsyth, directing his first feature, which is distinguished throughout by a singular dry wit, steadfastly carries the fantasy through into reality: the raid is treated by the youngsters (played by members of the Glasgow Youth Theatre) with a seriousness out of all proportion to its preposterousness. The film achieves the feat of turning a parochial comedy into a gently pointed, sharply observed satire on the state of a neglected corner of modern Britain without, happily, losing any of its local appeal. (Billy Greenlees, John Hughes, Derek Millar.)

THE AWAKENING

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Charlton Heston's obsession with resurrecting a long dead Egyptian queen, mysteriously linked with his own daughter, is swamped by production values (Egyptian locations, visits to museums and tombs) and the cliché of an alien culture being intrinsically terrifying. (Susannah York, Jill Townsend; director, Mike Newell.)

BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Galactic transplant for *The Magnificent Seven*, with the mercenaries (including Robert Vaughn in a black-clad replay) nobly coming to the aid of a threatened planet. Some nice notions, but little idea of what to do with them. (Richard Thomas, John Saxon, George Peppard; director, Jimmy T. Murakami.)

THE BLUE LAGOON

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Obscenely coy updating of H. de Vere Stacpoole's fantasy about two shipwrecked children growing up into romance, all tricked out in lushly vulgar images which prove that even Nestor Almendros needs a director at his elbow. (Brooke Shields, Christopher Atkins; director, Randal Kleiser.)

THE BLUES BROTHERS (CIC)

An attempt to outdo 1941 in costly mayhem, flaunting several nods to Spielberg (including a personal appearance) but sadly lacking his talent. The destruction gags, in the crudely unfunny manner of *Kentucky Fried Movie* and *Animal House*, misfire interminably. (John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd; director, John Landis.)

CALIGULA (GTO)

The much-disputed *Penthouse* opus arrives shorn of ten minutes by the British censor and major credits (no director or scriptwriter) by the process of litigation. An unenlightening look at political life in darkest Rome still blends incoherently with centrefold nudity and hardcore fantasies. (Malcolm McDowell, Peter O'Toole, Helen Mirren.)

DIVINE MADNESS

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Bette Midler in concert in Pasadena, though this is also the 'time capsule'

record of her most famous skits, schticks and pastiches ('Delores DeLago', Sophie Tucker). As tacky and energetic as one could wish. Not *The Last Waltz* but better than most concert films. (The Harlettes; director, Michael Ritchie.)

THE DOGS OF WAR

(United Artists)
From Le Carré to Forsyth. John Irvin sacrifices the exquisitely ambiguous ironies of his TV adaptation of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* to sheer narrative efficiency in his cinema debut, and delivers the formula goods in a consistently gripping, handsomely photographed yarn of mercenaries engineering a *coup d'état* in a corrupt African republic. (Christopher Walken, Tom Berenger, Colin Blakely.)

FLASH GORDON

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
This is the sort of project on which the workmanlike Kevin Connor might, with a fraction of the present budget, have profitably been let loose. Director Michael Hodges, abetted by jovial hamming from the players, approaches this adaptation of the Alex Raymond strip with a knowing, unconvincing naivety. (Sam J. Jones, Melody Anderson, Topol, Max Von Sydow.)

THE FORMULA (CIC)

In Steve Shagan's burdened thriller, a dog-eared LA cop, George C. Scott, monotonously tracks down an old Nazi formula for turning coal into petrol. The film's raison d'être is a gloriously indulged finale in which oil baron Marlon Brando justifies the duties of leadership (read 'stardom') and the perfidy of international cartels. (Marthe Keller; director, John G. Avildsen.)

HEARTLAND (Contemporary)

The vicissitudes of the Wyoming plains, circa 1910, are admirably set out in this undemonstrative, handsome film: an essay, told from a woman's point of view (but with no special pleading), on the classlessness of survival. (Rip Torn, Conchata Ferrell; director, Richard Pearce.)

HOPSCOTCH (Rank)

Prolonged shaggy dog story in which Walter Matthau, doing his usual thing as a disabused agent, eventually gives the CIA its comeuppance. A flat script and leaden direction do little to lighten the whimsy. (Glenda Jackson, Ned Beatty; director, Ronald Neame.)

THE HUNTER (CIC)

The adventures of a modern-day, real-life bounty hunter, only of interest since the film became Steve McQueen's last. He flexes his quizzical, even whimsical, action-man persona, but the film goes out in a blaze of cuteness, chases and psycho killers rather than elegiac glory. (Eli Wallach, Ben Johnson; director, Buzz Kulik.)

LAST EMBRACE (United Artists)

What should have been a cracking good yarn strewn with Hitchcockian motifs (and assorted national monuments: Niagara Falls, Princeton University). In the event, it is tediously overplotted and dramatically underdeveloped, sacrificing credibility to atmosphere. (Roy Scheider, Janet Margolin; director, Jonathan Demme.)

A MAN, A WOMAN AND A BANK (Rank)

Another comic bank-heist caper, told with insouciance and not a little knowingness (Donald Sutherland's back and Brooke Adams has got him, or vice versa). Noel Black's direction is gossamer-light and paper-thin, and tries to charm rather than bulldoze its way out of the cliché script. (Paul Mazursky.)

THE MOUNTAIN MEN

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Enveloped in beards and furs as he-men in God's country before civilisation ruined the West, Charlton Heston and Brian Keith spend more time killing Indians than talking. Just

as well, since the script (by Heston's son) is inconceivably banal. (Victoria Racimo; director, Richard Lang.)

THE ORLOVS (Rank)

Inspirational Soviet drama based on early Gorki, in which a poor, quarrelling couple are spiritually enriched by working in a cholera hospital. Solid playing by Nina Ruslanova and Anatoly Semynov, but veteran Mark Donskoi's direction is too calculated, with an ugly, zooming style largely obscuring flashes of his old flair.

RAISE THE TITANIC (ITC)

With only the most thinly plotted justification for the gimmick of salvaging the famous liner, Lord Grade's multi-million, would-be blockbuster inexorably sinks with all hands, and takes an unconscionably long time about it. (Jason Roberts, Richard Jordan; director, Jerry Jameson.)

SIR HENRY AT RAWLINSON END (Charisma)

All restraints are off in this pseudo-poetic (and occasionally very funny) cult send-up of the vagaries of the English aristocracy. A jumble, whimsically concocted by Vivian Stanshall, but Trevor Howard makes a perfect Sir Henry. (Denise Coffey, Patrick Magee; director, Steve Roberts.)

SOMEWHERE IN TIME (CIC)

The change in title, from the evocative *Bid Time Return* of Richard Matheson's original novel, says everything about this bland and nebulous film. Christopher Reeve, struggling playwright (and struggling still with comic-strip reactions), enjoys boating idylls and a little light Rachmaninov with 1912 *inamorata*. (Jane Seymour, Christopher Plummer; director, Jeannot Szwarc.)

THE SPECIAL EDITION OF CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Steven Spielberg's de luxe edition of his s-f bonanza is an inconclusive redraft. The fascination of the original—a cornucopia of popular culture—remains intact; the ending goes one step forward in terms of effects and two steps back in terms of coherence. (Richard Dreyfuss, François Truffaut.)

TERROR TRAIN (Fox)

An egregious group of co-eds on a train excursion fall prey to an avenging maniac in this tightly stereotyped but tolerably lively addition to the proliferating teenage-jopardy school of horror. (Ben Johnson, Jamie Lee Curtis; director, Roger Spottiswoode.)

THE THIRD GENERATION

(Cinegate)
Rainer Werner Fassbinder's apostrophe to the modern industrial state and its radical chic opposition is a rasping curse on both political houses. An internecine melodrama binds state and terrorists together in vampiric interdependence. Cynicism, despair and futility carry the day. (Volker Spengler, Bulle Ogier, Eddie Constantine, Hanna Schygulla.)

TIMES SQUARE

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)
A Stigwood-produced rock musical charting the misadventures of two teenage waifs loose in darkest Manhattan and the cult that springs up around them. Thanks to the deft direction of Alan Moyle, which slaloms past all the clichés, and an electrifying début by 15-year-old Robin Johnson as a very un-cute Broadway ragamuffin, it is infinitely more bracing than it sounds. (Tim Curry, Trini Alvarado.)

WILLIE & PHIL (Fox)

Paul Mazursky's relocation of *Jules et Jim* to 70s America struggles with no apparent strain against insuperable odds. The trio, Michael Ontkean, Margot Kidder and Ray Sharkey, are, however, fatally unserious about their romanticism.

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